

OUR INTELLECTUAL  
ATTITUDE IN AN AGE  
OF CRITICISM

MARION LE ROY BURTON

4.25

LIBRARY OF THE PROVIDENCE BIBLE INSTITUTE



DONATED BY  
Rev. F. S. Bernauer

PROPERTY OF  
NORTHEASTERN ~~STATE~~ INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
~~ROSELAND~~ FIELDS, NEW JERSEY





**OUR INTELLECTUAL ATTITUDE**  
*IN AN AGE OF CRITICISM*



30.090  
B9550

# OUR INTELLECTUAL ATTITUDE

IN AN  
AGE OF CRITICISM

BY  
MARION LEROY BURTON, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.  
PRESIDENT OF SMITH COLLEGE



PROPERTY OF  
NORTHEASTERN BIBLE INSTITUTE LIBRARY  
ESSEX FELLS, NEW JERSEY

THE PILGRIM PRESS  
BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO

#1624

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE  
POWELL LIBRARY  
SANTA CLARITA, CA 91321

COPYRIGHT, 1913  
BY LUTHER H. CARY

THE · PLIMPTON · PRESS  
NORWOOD · MASS · U · S · A

TO  
MY TEACHERS  
AT YALE





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024

## PREFACE

THE line of thought followed in this volume has been used rather widely by the author. He has delivered lectures under the same title as this book before many clubs and educational organizations through this country. Among these should be mentioned the Congregational Clubs of Boston, Providence, New Haven, Hartford, Springfield and Syracuse. Parts of it have also been incorporated in lectures at Yale Divinity School, Auburn Theological Seminary, Smith College, Mount Hermon School, Northfield Seminary and Dana Hall.

In Europe, the writer also presented some of this material in lectures delivered before the American Students' Club at the University of Berlin, at Constantinople and Robert College in Turkey and at Mansfield College, Oxford.

This little volume is sent forth in the hope that it may prove helpful to some in arriving at a satisfactory intellectual point of view in an age of doubt.

M. L. BURTON.

SMITH COLLEGE, Northampton, Mass.  
August 12, 1913.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	3
II AN AGE OF CRITICISM . . . . .	8
III PRESENT CONDITIONS . . . . .	20
IV THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DOUBT . . . . .	32
V THE CAUSE OF DOUBT . . . . .	51
VI THE CAUSE OF DOUBT (CONTINUED) . . . . .	70
VII OUR INTELLECTUAL ATTITUDE . . . . .	99
VIII THE FREEDOM OF THE TRUTH . . . . .	120
IX THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH. . . . .	150
X WHAT THE MODERN CHRISTIAN BELIEVES	173
XI WHY THE MODERN CHRISTIAN BELIEVES .	219
XII EDUCATION AND RELIGION . . . . .	239





OUR INTELLECTUAL ATTITUDE  
*IN AN AGE OF CRITICISM*



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

**T**HE title of this book is intended to indicate rather definitely the field of thought with which we are to deal. For every thinking person, it raises the intensely practical question: What shall be my intellectual attitude or point of view in an age when all knowledge is being critically examined and every belief is being fearlessly tested?

It endeavors to answer this question by beginning with a brief statement of the facts which show that we live in an age of both technical and practical criticism, which has resulted in unprecedented transformations of many fields of knowledge and striking reformulations of many traditional beliefs and doctrines. For numberless individuals this has brought a period of intellectual transition, confusion and doubt. It becomes necessary, therefore, to consider the significance of doubt, involving as it does both dangers and benefits and to search for the causes of doubt not only as they appear in the thought changes of our day, but also as the inevitable accompaniment of all earnest and deep thinking. We are then prepared to at-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

tempt definitely the statement of our point of view in the midst of shifting opinions and a fluctuating intellectual environment.

From one standpoint it might be assumed that our task at this juncture is completed, but we find ourselves face to face with the fundamental question of authority which we cannot escape. If the intellectual attitude which is suggested is the true one, does that replace outer with inner authority? Having attempted to answer that problem, we are prepared for the more constructive and positive portion of our task where we endeavor to apply, in the realm of religion from the point of view of the modern Christian, the principles which have been set forth. If we accept the freedom of the truth as our ideal we are inevitably driven on to search for the sources of Christian truth. To satisfy a natural and just desire for constructive thinking we then undertake in merest outline to state the content and grounds of Christian belief. A final chapter considers the practical issues involved for the college and the church in developing and maintaining the right relationships of education and religion. This very brief summary indicates the general direction which our thought is to take and the limits within which we shall endeavor to remain.

The nature of this work, therefore, becomes obvious at once. It is intended for the person who *thinks*, and particularly for the one who is disturbed by the new tendencies in our

## *Introductory Chapter*

thought world. It is not written for the theologian, or the philosopher, or the specialist. It is an effort to put in simple language, with a complete absence of technical terms, certain widely accepted truths which have proven helpful to many. It is the discussion of a question which is primarily intellectual. If the reader feels that the treatment at times is coldly intellectual, he must remember that the nature of our subject and the limits of our field require it. It is hoped, however, that by clarifying the mind, the heart may find more abiding comfort and the will truer inspiration.

The sole object of the writer is to help those who find themselves losing their thought anchors and drifting about upon an uncharted intellectual sea. Such an age as we are now living in is the delight and inspiration of the scientist and the philosopher. The intellectual spirit of our day means life to the scholar. He glories in his freedom. But for the larger proportion of mankind, it has brought quite the opposite consequences. To the college student, the layman, and that hypothetical being "the man of the street" it often means prolonged intellectual confusion and uncertainty. In many instances it has involved the loss of confidence in fundamental and eternal verities. For those who are mentally perplexed, who find their minds filled with unsatisfying negations, who yearn intensely for some positive constructive affirmations, this work is primarily intended.



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

The spirit which prompts these chapters is one of deep and profound sympathy for those who honestly feel that their foundations have crumbled and who are searching intently for new ground upon which they may build. It is with genuine reverence for the past and with sincere respect for all who may hold to other conclusions that the author enters upon this task. He cannot refrain, however, from discussing the problem with utter frankness and perfect candor. Unless we can approach our subject with a determination to be satisfied with nothing but the truth, and to search for it regardless of the consequences to ourselves or our beliefs, then we are foredoomed to failure and dissatisfaction. We must face our life problems honestly and fearlessly. That means, of course, that we cannot all agree. But agreement is not the only desideratum. It will be a glorious day when all men can disagree intellectually if necessary and still love one another. Clear and earnest thinkers in every age have arrived at differing conclusions and thus mankind has advanced in its intellectual grasp of the universe. Every true teacher knows that his best pupils are those who disagree with him. It is, therefore, with no desire to thrust upon others his own point of view that the writer presents this line of thought but solely because by virtue of his experience as an educator he recognizes the need of certain types of minds and realizes their present dissatisfaction with some forms of thought.

## *Introductory Chapter*

The practical significance of our subject deserves a word of recognition. The conclusion here reached applies to no one field of thought. It purports to be a true intellectual attitude which will be equally valuable in every realm of knowledge. It is fundamental. It endeavors to go back of any of the specific problems of special disciplines and to establish the right method of approach to questions of the mind. To be sure it draws most of its illustrative material from the fields of psychology, philosophy and religion, but this plan is followed because it is in these realms that the test of our principle becomes most severe. If the work were more pretentious and couched in technical terminology, it might more correctly be entitled "Epistemology and Religion."

Here then is our task: with an absence of technical terms, with a desire to help the person who doubts to a more satisfactory understanding of his world and his relationship to it, with a spirit of reverence for the past and an unquenchable yearning for the truth, to suggest in positive constructive form a worthy intellectual attitude in this age of criticism.

## CHAPTER II

### AN AGE OF CRITICISM

**W**E live in an age of criticism. Whether we are aware of it or not, whether we approve of it or not, whether we are a part of it or not, the fact remains that the spirit of criticism has captivated our generation. It is for the purpose of establishing this statement that this chapter is written.

By the term "criticism" we mean preëminently the method employed today by scholars in every field in their search for truth and in their eagerness to expand the borders of knowledge. It is the method which approaches every question with the clear determination to be satisfied with nothing but well attested facts. What man has thought or believed about a subject is but one element in the problem. Nothing is accepted as true or final just because a previous generation has believed it. The history of any problem is not disregarded but accepted only as an evidence of what others have thought about it. Back of their conclusions were certain facts which the critical scholar demands. He can find no satisfaction in theories, hypotheses or beliefs save as he knows the grounds of those interpretations. He is not animated

## *An Age of Criticism*

so much by a desire to prove or disprove what others believe as he is to find the ultimate truth involved in any question. For him the only defence of any truth is its strict conformity to the actual facts of a stern and unalterable outer world combined with an unqualified satisfaction of the demands of reason and experience. Such is his ideal. It becomes for the true critic his very meat and drink. All error, inaccuracy and false inference he abhors. He demands the truth.

Consequently as he approaches a subject he purposes to learn all there is to be known about it. If it is a literary document he insists upon knowing as accurately as possible when it was written, under what circumstances it was produced, out of what sort of a civilization it came and in general what the background was upon which it appeared. He wishes to know, if possible, who the author was, what his purpose was in writing, to whom the work was addressed, what his own experiences had been which prompted his message, what other documents he produced, and at what time in his career the particular work under investigation was written. The true critic, moreover, is determined to know whether more than one hand is evident in the document, whether later writers or scribes have made mistakes in copying, or have deliberately altered the text, or have omitted or added new sections. He therefore studies carefully every word and sentence and follows with the closest scrutiny the development of the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

thought to test its genuineness and originality. In other words no possible phase of the problem is allowed to escape. He must know its author, its date, its origin, its content, its history, and everything which will help to a genuine scientific understanding and appreciation of it. It is this sort of an approach to a subject, this method by which a scholar endeavors to arrive at tenable conclusions, this means by which he struggles to find new truth and make new discoveries that we mean when we use the term "criticism."

Now when we say that we live in an age of criticism, we are simply stating the fact that our day is preëminent for the prevalence of this method among our scholars, scientists, research workers and investigators and that this critical spirit pervades the thought of our day. Nothing has been accepted by the present generation of scholars simply and solely because it was accepted by an earlier generation. Nothing has been held too sacred for criticism. Everything has been questioned, re-examined and investigated. Old truths have been either confirmed, or reformulated or abandoned. Nothing has been received upon naked authority. Every position, every theory, every body of knowledge has been subjected to a most severe, painstaking, unprejudiced criticism and investigation. The critical method has become *the* method of the scholar. So rapid has been the progress in practically all fields of knowledge that few, if any, books ten years old give



## *An Age of Criticism*

one a sufficiently adequate treatment of their subject. At our colleges and universities to-day are men and women devoting all their energies and thought to the discovery of new truth and the establishment of new conclusions. Every candidate for the doctorate is required by years of study to make some original contribution, however small or large, to the world's knowledge. Unquestionably the critical method and spirit has been enthroned at the seats of learning in this and other countries.

For specific, concrete data to establish this general assertion we need only to turn to the various fields of knowledge. Chemistry, physics, biology, psychology, philosophy, theology and many other disciplines have all been dominated by the critical spirit. While the chemist has not questioned a large mass of facts which came to him out of the past, he has altered many of the fundamental conclusions of his predecessors. While he never expects to find error in large realms of facts, for example, that zinc and sulphuric acid produce hydrogen and zinc sulphate, he does discover new elements such as radium, and evolves new hypotheses concerning atoms and molecules. He is subjecting to the severest tests all of the most significant theories of the past generation. In the realm of physics the critical method has been at work with results which are nothing short of astounding. Numberless discoveries in this field are giving to mankind a new mastery of the forces of nature. The astonishing de-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

velopment of our technical and professional institutions is only one evidence of the fact that unusual progress is being made in the successful application and utilization of the laws of nature. Within a generation, biology has given us a totally new conception of all life. Beginning with Darwin and Wallace, we have gradually come, in the light of evolution, to see new meanings in the word "Creation" and to find new interpretations for man's nature and constitution. Experimental psychology has made personality a new word and completely upset many former theories of education. Philosophy has been the very embodiment of the critical spirit and since Immanuel Kant dogmatism has been vanishing. In the realms of history the frequent discovery of new data is compelling new interpretations of historic events, persons and periods. In fact, in all fields today criticism is at work. It has become the unquestioned, prevailing method of the scholar everywhere. He who questions everything in his search for reality does not question this method, for the critical spirit is but another name for the love of truth.

The most perplexing illustration of the statement that we live in an age of criticism is found in the realm of biblical scholarship. In the sciences, in history, in literature and philosophy, criticism has produced remarkable changes, but mankind in general finds it comparatively easy to alter its knowledge upon some scientific question, or to accept a new interpretation

## *An Age of Criticism*

of some historic character, or to doubt the authorship of certain works or to consider new systems of philosophy. But when the spirit of criticism entered the field of biblical literature it at once involved interests which were sacred and dealt with problems which concerned the deepest things of life. Criticism now confronted religious beliefs, holy convictions, stubborn prejudices and blind superstitions. But even in the midst of these forces the critic has been true to his method and ideals. The composition, date and authorship of every book of the Bible have been sought with the greatest diligence and thoroughness. The Scriptures, which since the days of the Protestant Reformation have stood as the external authority of the Christian in all matters of religion, have been the object of a long and fearless investigation. The conclusions which have been reached, the new light which has been thrown upon the Bible, the fresh interpretations which have been given to its contents need not detain us here. It is sufficient for our present purpose to recognize the fact that the Bible has been approached just as other literature and subjected to the same test. The battle is largely over now. Many vitally important questions of higher and lower criticism remain, but the historico-critical method has been established, its underlying principles are generally accepted and the day of constructive scholarship has dawned.

As we view various and widely separated

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

fields of knowledge, therefore, it becomes apparent that the scholars of our generation have been dominated by the methods and ideals of the critical spirit. We are witnessing unparalleled transformations of knowledge in all realms. We live in a time when no assertion is to be accepted upon mere *ipse dixit* authority, but when every aspect of knowledge, by universal agreement in the guild of scholars at least, is open to sane and reverent criticism and to unbiased and accurate investigation. So far as our scholarly world is concerned we find abundant proof of the statement that we live in an age of criticism.

But we cannot pause here. The spirit of criticism is not in the heavens alone. Not only in the scholar's study or the scientist's laboratory do we find the devotees of this ideal. The colleges and universities of the world are not its only exponents. It has worked its way into the shop, the store, the home, the press, and into every phase of our common life. In America, at least, it seems to be an inevitable concomitant of democracy. Criticism is rampant. It is king. By the term "criticism" in this sense we mean something more than the method of investigators. It is the same spirit applied in a most practical manner to the common problems of life. It expresses the attitude of our age to its chief organized forms and activities. Our generation is intensely critical not only technically but practically. Witness, for example, the extent and variety

## *An Age of Criticism*

of the criticism passed upon the Christian church. We are told that it is inefficient and ill-adjusted to the needs of modern society. Statistics are used to show the decline in attendance and accessions. Great, nation-wide campaigns are conducted in the name of "Men and Religion" because it is alleged the church has lost its grasp on men. It is asserted that the church fails to interest the young people and that a deplorable chasm exists between it and the laboring classes. It is insisted that the average church has failed to sense the remarkable changes in current thought, does not understand the point of view of the modern man, and is making absurd creedal demands of those scientifically trained. It is alleged that in the establishment of higher ethical standards in both business and politics during the last decade, the expected leadership of the church in the campaigns against dishonesty, faithlessness and demagogism has not been exerted. The failure, moreover, is that of the very organization which stands for high moral and spiritual life.

Even within the Roman Catholic Church we see the effects of the critical spirit in the Modernist movement. The fact that such a tendency has manifested itself, that its supporters have dared to lift their voices within the pale of the Mother Church, that it became so significant that it merited and received the recognition of the Head of the Church, is one of the most striking evidences of the fact that we live



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

in an age of criticism. Its infinite ramifications and far-reaching influence could not be better illustrated. It has struck at an organization whose dignity, age, service and authority command the esteem and reverence of unnumbered myriads of people. It was logical and inevitable, therefore, that the Pope should utter the pronunciamento against Modernism, for its principles are diametrically opposed to the fundamental and basal conceptions of Roman Catholicism. [It becomes apparent that the whole Christian Church, Catholic and Protestant alike, has been the object of a criticism at once severe and widespread. Our age is characterized by the presence of this critical attitude in its interpretation and consideration of its organized activities of which the church is one of its most ancient, useful and dignified forms.

This practical, critical attitude is manifested toward nearly all of the vital interests of our civilization. Not only the church, but our institutions of learning from the lowest to the highest are the object of unparalleled and scathing criticism. It is said that the primary grades waste at least two years of the time of every child, that the high school suffers from mal-adjustment both to the community at large and to the college and that our institutions of higher learning are affected by a great variety of serious ills. We are told, for example, that student activities, including athletics, literary and dramatic interests, are the primary concern of the student, and that the

## *An Age of Criticism*

real work of the college in class room, laboratory and library is regarded as the necessary evil which he must endure. We are assured that the student who studies is an anomaly; we are told that the chief interest of the professor is his own research work and scholarly productivity, just as the general college life with all its fascinations is the supreme satisfaction of the student. By both professor and student, we are informed, the work of the lecture hall is regarded as of secondary importance. It is further insisted that the lecture method, the elective system, the disorganized hap-hazard examination plan all tend toward superficial work and fail to produce the man who can think clearly, consecutively and accurately and who has at his disposal a thorough knowledge of even one subject. We are told that we are trying to do for the mass what can be done only for the individual, that all personal relationship between teacher and student is lost, and that instruction is rarely differentiated sufficiently to meet the needs of the individual student. The life of the colleges is frequently characterized as undemocratic. It is asserted that extravagance and luxury prevail and that the normal freedom of college life has been replaced by unbridled license. Criticism has been so severe that some parents have actually wondered whether the college was a safe place for the son or daughter. The administration, likewise, has been accused of being autocratic, or inefficient or dominated too



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

largely by the standards of a financial and commercial age. Again it becomes obvious that the spirit of criticism has directed itself with telling force against institutions of great strength and undeniable value to our civilization. The confidence which is reposed in them is evident from the generous and continued financial support which they are receiving throughout our country, but at the same time they are not wanting for vigorous critics.

It may now help us to recognize the universal character of this critical attitude if we observe that the church and college are only typical illustrations rather than unique instances of the operation of this spirit. In fact we may go to the heart of the situation at once by raising this question: What important organization, or agency, or institution in our life today is not criticized? Our government itself, whether municipal, state or federal is constantly the object of most grave and serious misgivings. The city governments of the United States particularly during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century were colossal failures. The just criticism heaped upon them by both American and foreign critics was the disgrace of free government. Democracy itself is very seriously questioned today by many as an efficient and permanent form of government. Our system of political parties has begun anew to show very grave defects. Our judiciary and courts are attacked repeatedly by various classes of our populace. Even the Supreme

## *An Age of Criticism*

Court of the United States, a body deserving the highest respect and reverence of our citizens, has been vigorously criticized. The consideration and public discussion of such questions as the recall of judges or of decisions indicates the very serious, practical and pressing nature of these criticisms.

In fact, our whole social and economic order is the object of most fundamental and searching investigation. The inequalities of life, the present organization of the business world, the creation and distribution of wealth, the control of large concerns, these are only obvious illustrations of the subjects now paramount in the minds not only of our economists, but of the people at large. Socialism, in all its varied forms, stands out as a vigorous criticism of the existing order. Deeper still is the attitude to the home and marriage. The shocking prevalence of divorce, the tacit but nevertheless effectual questioning of monogamy, point to the fact that nothing is too sacred to escape the ravages of criticism. Not only our religious and educational organizations, therefore, but every form of our common life is today the recipient of fearless and aggressive criticism. The government, our political system, our courts, our social order, the home, these must serve as ample evidence that we live in an age not only of scholarly critical investigation, but also of practical vital criticism of all our organized activities. We live in an age of criticism.

[ 19 ]

## CHAPTER III

### PRESENT CONDITIONS

IT is not difficult to recognize several distinct stages or periods within the age of criticism which we have endeavored to describe. It is not our purpose, however, in the present chapter, to attempt in any sense a detailed history of criticism or to deal with the individual critics and investigators who have contributed to the common result. It has been a mighty movement. It had its beginnings in the Eighteenth Century and gradually gained in influence until during the latter part of the Nineteenth Century we felt, in America at least, its full force. It is a trite statement but a significant fact that we live in an age of transition. The Protestant Reformation marked a great change in the history of Christendom, and was accompanied by violent and far-reaching movements. It is well within the truth to assert that our generation has passed through a revolution in thought which is no less significant than that of the time of Luther. The present generation thinks in terms which are totally different from those of our fathers. We live in a new universe and a new environment. Such a transformation

## *Present Conditions*

could not be brought about in a day or in a decade. It may be helpful, therefore, to trace briefly the obvious periods in this age of transition in order that we may thereby better appreciate the present status of our intellectual world.

When our leaders of thought began to announce their new discoveries, new conclusions and new interpretations of nature, of the universe, of man, of the Bible and of theology, it came, to use a term of Socrates, as a "torpedo shock" to the world in general. It seemed unthinkable to those who thought in the terms to which they and their fathers had been accustomed that these things could be true. It appeared to sweep away their moorings. For the early critics the ground was so cumbered with false notions and superstitions that their task seemed to be that of clearing the site for a new superstructure of knowledge. Their work gave the impression of being purely negative. The emphasis in the minds of those who listened was upon the fact that certain things which had been believed were false. In fact the critics themselves were inevitably involved somewhat in this phase of their work. The time could be characterized justly as the destructive period. It was an era when attention was directed toward the things which were not true. It was the day when we were impressed with the fact that the world was not created in six days of twenty-four hours each, that man was not something totally different

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

and separate in origin from the rest of the animal world, that the Bible was not a book dropped down out of heaven written in the English language, and that the universe was not a place of chance and miracle.

It was perfectly natural, therefore, that thinking men and women, and particularly the persons of conservative temperament, should take a hostile attitude to the whole critical method and movement. It was robbing them of their knowledge, their belief and their religion. Just when the scientists were struggling for law and order it seemed to the layman that his whole universe was topsy-turvy and out of joint. Truths which all the world had accepted for generations and had never questioned were now asserted to be but "idols of the den." Criticism became a synonym for negativity, skepticism and agnosticism. It could tear down but not build up. It was playing havoc with many of the fundamental motives and ideals of society. There came a period in the Christian Church when the very term criticism was a byword and a hissing. The words "higher criticism" which were adopted to distinguish it from so-called "lower criticism" fell into great disrepute among conservative people. Lower criticism had dealt with questions of texts, editions and kindred subjects. Higher criticism assayed to determine the composition, date and authorship of the various books of the Bible. The former was perfectly harmless, while the latter in-

## *Present Conditions*

volved questions of deepest moment to the theologians of the older school. The words "higher criticism" became a term of contempt. Any man who accepted its conclusions was regarded as a heretic and unfit to "bear the vessels of the Lord" either as a layman or a minister. In a generation when religious distinctions were more vital than they are today, the bitterness which was engendered and the hostility which resulted from growing differences in thought seem incredible to us of today. In the United States different sections of the country responded differently to the new point of view. New England, conservative in most respects, rapidly recognized the appeal of the newer attitude, while the West, usually radical and progressive, was much slower to accept the conclusions of modern criticism. Even today there is in the churches at large a noticeable difference between the two sections of the country. Such statements are always capable of misinterpretation, for in the West are many communities more progressive and modern in their thought than some localities in New England. But in general the statement seems well within the bounds of truth. It becomes clear that criticism was calling forth differences in belief and that the destructive period was met by a hostile attitude on the part of a large proportion of the thinking people.

Gradually it became evident that criticism was something more than a negative force. It was producing results. In the long run, man



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

can always be trusted to respond to the appeal of reason. Criticism was not primarily concerned with destroying the knowledge of the past. It did not recognize time distinctions in truth. The question of utmost importance was not whether this assertion was new or old but whether it was true or false. Criticism wanted the truth regardless of its effects or its ramifications. Then it slowly became obvious that there was an irresistible appeal in this scientific attitude, that here was intellectual satisfaction and inspiration. Evolution became not a group of empty negations, but a positive, constructive interpretation of life. The new conception of causation was not banishing the miracle so much as it was giving us an orderly law-abiding universe. Biblical criticism was not destroying our belief so much as it was helping us to an interpretation of the Scriptures which bridged the growing chasm between religion and science. It became evident to larger numbers that many fields of knowledge were being marvelously transformed and expanded. This meant a larger universe, a broader world and consequently a richer and deeper life. As a result of well established and widely accepted scientific discoveries, it became inevitable that man's religious beliefs should either be regarded as superstition and ignorance or be largely reconstructed and brought into harmony with the modern world view. Reconstruction of theological thought and modification of current beliefs were rapid

## *Present Conditions*

and wholesome. In fact it can be asserted without qualification that today we have emerged into a splendid period of growing positiveness. The thought of the present is constructive in the best sense of the word. The day of destructive, negative criticism has passed and we find ourselves living in a time when scholars in every field are pushing the frontier of knowledge a little farther each year and providing us constantly with new insights into nature, truth and reality. The world today is one as never before. The breach between science and religion is a matter of history. In the light of modern conclusions, biblical scholarship, geology, biology, astronomy, philosophy and psychology raise no insuperable obstacles to belief but rather enlarge and unify the knowledge and faith of the modern man.

Consequently, just as the destructive period of criticism was followed or accompanied by a hostile attitude on the part of large numbers of people, so today a period of growing positiveness and reconstruction is creating a new and favorable appreciation of the critical method and spirit. Its value is now widely recognized. It is seen that where criticism was negative it was simply pointing out the defects, limitations and errors in our knowledge and beliefs. It is now willingly granted that it has replaced these things with a better and more satisfying interpretation of the world. It has secured great improvements by



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

bringing to bear the combined scholarship and judgment of society upon our life problems. Criticism has stood ready to attack falsity and mistakes in the new positions as well as in the old theories. It has served as a splendid spur to the most accurate, thorough and reverent approach to the problems of the mind. The world is beginning to recognize the characteristics of the true critic and silently to disregard the inaccurate scholar. It sees that above all else the genuine critic is fair and just, that he has the ability to consider all the facts involved in a problem, that he endeavors to grasp the subject as a whole, that he sees the relationship and bearing of every detail of the question and that his conclusions are never based upon a partial knowledge of the facts. He is marked by a complete absence of prejudice or preconceived notions or theories. While at first his work may give the impression that he is negative and destructive, it soon appears that his sole aim is to provide a constructive interpretation of the problem and to point the way out. His one all-absorbing passion is to find the truth. Such a spirit could not fail to receive ultimately the appreciation and commendation of discriminating people. And such has been the result. The response to modern criticism in its best forms has been manifested in a tendency to disregard all falsity in spirit or fact or interpretation, to suspend judgment upon questions where the evidence was still incomplete and gladly and readily to accept

## *Present Conditions*

its conclusions where they have complied with the standards of truth and experience.

But in our endeavor to state present conditions we need to be extremely cautious. The statements made above are undoubtedly sustained by the facts of our thought world today. In dealing, however, with any such movement as this it is very easy to convey false impressions. It is unusually difficult to relate accurately the history of any change in thought. It is so vague, intangible and elusive, so utterly devoid of rigid, fixed boundaries that at almost every point you could pause and question whether the exact opposite of your statement would not be nearer to the truth. It is, therefore, necessary to point out at this juncture that we must not assume that formerly everyone was hostile to criticism and that now everyone has emerged with an unqualified devotion to its ideals and a full and complete acceptance of its conclusions. Unquestionably criticism is gradually winning its way to the mind of our generation. But if that victory were already won this book would not have been written. It is just because multitudes of people today are seriously facing this whole question that we have ventured to formulate an intellectual point of view which has been found eminently satisfactory in actual experience.

What, then, is the present condition of the intellectual life of many people? We must acknowledge frankly that there are probably as many different conditions as there are

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

serious minded individuals. While the present day is recognizing more widely the value of the critical method, while there is more general and favorable consensus of opinion upon the conclusions of modern scholarship, we must not forget that all about us are individuals representing widely differing stages of progress or development in their transition from one thought world to another.

For example, consider the varying points of view represented in the average audience of today. If it is a religious gathering, here is a large group represented by the conservative. He has very definite and fixed views upon all the questions of religion. He knows what he thinks about the Bible, the origin of man, the person of Christ, the scheme of salvation and the methods of God in ordering his universe. He is sure his views are right and they are among the sacred possessions of his life. His religion, moreover, has been the inspiration of men through centuries, and has produced a type of Christian character which commands admiration. On the other hand, here is a smaller group represented by the man trained critically and scientifically. He has an entirely new and different point of view. For him the world is a process and not a product. His acceptance of the major tenets of evolution has largely determined his ideas of creation, the origin of man, and of sin. His belief in causation has played havoc with the traditional ideas of miracles, freedom of the will and related sub-

## *Present Conditions*

jects. His views now are the only ones which will satisfy not alone his reason as such but his total inner self. Besides these two rather clearly defined types there will be present a large central group who may or may not be aware of these radically different attitudes. This group will include the person who is thoroughly dissatisfied with the growing inconsistencies of his thought but has scarcely begun to formulate for himself that dissatisfaction. There will be here also the bewildered person who feels hopelessly lost in the midst of changes which lie beyond his grasp. There will be present many honest men and women naturally and temperamentally liberal and progressive who fear that they will lose their religious faith unless they cling tenaciously to the old forms and terminologies.

There is still another person who concerns us perhaps more than all others. The conservative so-called has a religion which meets his needs and he is not disturbed by our subject. He has solved his problem and must be granted, without any qualifications whatever, the same right to choose his point of view as others claim for themselves. The liberal man has also usually adjusted his intellectual problems quite to his satisfaction even if thereby he has temporarily lost in spiritual warmth and reverence. The great central group, moreover, is not disturbed unduly by the intellectual formulation of its problem. But the person who claims our chief interest is the man who doubts

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

honestly and sincerely. He is searching diligently for the things which will satisfy him, but cannot find them. He is disturbed deeply by his condition. He does not understand yet the real significance of his doubt nor does he analyze for himself why it has arisen. At times he is overwhelmed by his uncertainties and perplexities. If he is thoroughly conscientious, he becomes almost distracted with his inability to come out upon something fixed and permanent. Now one of three things must inevitably happen to that man. He may struggle on and finally conclude that the matter is not of serious importance and end in a state of mental indifference and stagnation. He may think deeply and earnestly, but being unable to arrive at any tenable conclusions, "throw the whole problem overboard" and pass out into a state of excessive skepticism and utter negativity. Or he may be able to suspend judgment upon some questions by placing them in the background of his mind, awaken to a real appreciation of the truer meaning of a period of doubt and ultimately emerge with a genuine intellectual attitude which equips him for any emergencies in the problems of thought.

Now there can be no question that today there are many persons who doubt. *Any thinking person doubts at times.* Much mental uncertainty, distraction and perplexity exists today. Just because criticism is king, doubt is rampant. Within the minds of students today there is much indifference, skepticism

## *Present Conditions*

and doubt. Anyone who knows the American under-graduate realizes that large numbers of young men and women are diligently searching for the way out from the mists and darkness of a period of fundamental doubt. To help save them from intellectual indifference and stagnation, to keep them from becoming permanently and unduly skeptical and agnostic, to enable them to use their doubt as a means to a new insight into the problems of the universe, of life and religion, to assist them to a genuine and satisfying religious belief, is the object of this little volume. What then can be the meaning of this doubt through which every earnest person must pass?



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DOUBT

WE have seen that the age of criticism in which we are living has produced a wide variety of intellectual states and that among these the one which deserves our special consideration is doubt. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to bring us face to face with the problem of doubt. We shall not endeavor to enter upon an essentially philosophical treatment of its nature but rather attempt to find its true meaning in our search for a satisfactory intellectual attitude. Again we shall not be occupied so much with the meaning of the term "doubt" as we shall be with the significance of a period of doubt for the intellectual life of the individual and consequently for his generation.

If for the moment we could strip the word "doubt" of all its varied connotations acquired by its constant use in connection with intellectual questions and particularly those of religion and theology, what would we find it to mean? A person remarks casually about some assertion which has been made in his presence, "I doubt it." What does he intend to convey?

## *The Significance of Doubt*

Obviously he may mean various things; either that he has in his possession certain facts which lead him to believe that the statement is erroneous, or that from his general knowledge and point of view it is difficult for him to accept it, or that his judgment and interpretation of the situation lead him to a different conclusion, or that with a limited and partial knowledge of the question he cannot either accept or reject the assertion, but must hold his opinion in abeyance. In intellectual questions every person who thinks seriously and honestly is entitled to any one of at least three attitudes. (1) He may reject the theory or opinion which is offered because he believes it is contrary to the facts as he sees them and therefore cannot be adjusted to his interpretation of the world and life; or (2) he may accept it as expressing what appears to him to be the truth and as recognizing all the salient features of the problem and as complying with his world view; or (3) he may find it impossible to do either of these things because in some respects the theory seems true and in others false, in some essentials it is eminently satisfactory, in other significant considerations it seems defective. In other words he is forced, for the sake of intellectual honesty and mental integrity, to suspend judgment. Now this third attitude is doubt. Any man who rejects a hypothesis, belief or doctrine is not necessarily a doubter; he may have his own solution for the difficulty. The atheist is not a doubter. He rejects the



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

theistic interpretation of the universe and if he is logical sets up a mechanical explanation in its stead. The true doubter is the person who for the time being cannot arrive at certainty, who has no solution for his intellectual difficulties and who is striving earnestly and seriously to find the way out. His problems run off into the dark, a method of the sophists which Plato condemned. His attitude is not so much that of rejecting generally accepted conclusions as it is that those conclusions do not fit the facts of his knowledge and experience. He consequently must question those conclusions and require some solution which more nearly fits the facts. He is a man who in his thinking has found discrepancies between currently accepted opinion or knowledge and the stern facts of the world. The knowledge, therefore, to him is unsatisfactory and he demands something more. His difficulty is that for the time being that "something more" is elusive. He cannot find it. He is questioning, investigating, searching. He doubts.

Now this has been written for the specific purpose of approaching doubt from a perfectly natural point of view. In doing so we are at once in a position to be free from many of the false implications and shades of meaning which are commonly attached to the word. The attitude to doubt, widely current until quite recently, carried inferences which the definition which has just been formulated scarcely recognizes. It was a grave matter for a person to

## *The Significance of Doubt*

doubt. It was an occasion of profound significance when any individual ventured to question commonly accepted truths and particularly doctrinal beliefs. To doubt was not only irreverent but an unmistakable evidence of unregenerate human nature. It was more than an intellectual question, it was a moral and religious condition. It was not only foolish, it was sinful. It was not a mark of intellectual vigor, but an evidence of human pride. Back of all this feeling was the certain confidence that man possessed a full and authoritative knowledge of the world and of God's will for his creation. The holy Scriptures were the final authority for the Protestant and the Church for the Roman Catholic. With that belief it was perfectly logical that our fathers should interpret doubt as they did. The Bible, the creeds, the doctrines of the church were all beyond questioning and doubt. When, therefore, a rare individual arose who ventured to raise the issue concerning any belief he was at once the object of condemnation and discipline. The truth was known, the final authority had been constituted, to doubt it, therefore, was culpable. Consequently it is not difficult to understand why our generation has felt so deeply the changes produced by an age of critical investigation, and why the period of doubt which has ensued requires our most reverent and sympathetic consideration.

If we are to be entirely fair to the facts it must be willingly conceded that there was a

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

large element of truth in the older attitude to doubt. We may live in another generation, with quite a different interpretation of the authority of the Scripture or the church, we may express our thoughts in new terms, but our fathers were right in some measure in their dread and condemnation of doubt. There are grave dangers associated with any period of doubt and we cannot find the significance of such a state for either the individual or society without recognizing those dangers.

Certain evils or difficulties inhere in the very nature of doubt. It is a negative state and negations are never effective. Mankind has always felt a natural and justifiable abhorrence of doubt. To be sure, the history of philosophy has been frequently marked by the appearance of skepticism, but the deeper significance of that fact we shall see later in this chapter when we consider the benefits or value of doubt. Man recoils from doubt as from the dampness and chill of a cave and seeks certainty and knowledge as he does light and sunshine. And this fact is grounded in reason. Doubt never inspires the doubter. As a permanent state, we could never say it is glorious to doubt. One cannot imagine a public speaker growing eloquent over the summons to doubt. He could not hold it up as a great inspirational force for human life. When a man doubts, he is more or less introspective, meditative and passive. He is not eager for active life. Doubt for the time being defeats action and

## *The Significance of Doubt*

paralyzes the will. In the last analysis a period of doubt is a period of preparation. A man who doubts is still engaged in the effort to organize his forces. To compel him to enter the conflict just at that particular juncture, is unjustly to require defeat. Every person must be given time to gird himself for the battle. Doubt, in its very nature, is essentially negative and disorganizing. It becomes, therefore, all the more important that we should endeavor to find a satisfactory way of escape from it.

Again certain dangers arise from a false spirit in doubting. There are true, genuine doubters and false, shallow doubters. Certain individuals of limited training and experience in some way get the impression that doubt is the mark of the critical scholar. Therefore they must doubt. It is something of which they are proud and in which they glory. Their doubt is not so fundamental and disturbing that it robs them of sleep. It has not gotten into their very souls and demanded a way out. Their problems are those of the books they have read and not of the experiences which have challenged their very faith. It is the characteristic of a scholarly, thoughtful person to find difficulty with intellectual problems and so they also find them. They assume, furthermore, that all certainty and conviction are the result of pure dogmatism or blind superstition. They are sure of nothing, their knowledge is all mystery because anyone who thinks deeply is overwhelmed by the ignorance of mankind

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

and is astounded by the narrow limits of human knowledge. They minimize faith and regard it as a relic of an unscientific age. It is obvious that such an attitude in doubt is utterly false and is fraught with grave dangers for any individual who falls into it. It is something worse than mere negation. It is sham and pretense. It verges on intellectual hypocrisy.

Furthermore, unfortunate conditions are liable to arise from a false use of doubt. Here the difficulty results, not from the inevitable drag of doubt, nor from a superficial estimate of the supposed impression it makes upon others, but rather from an erroneous conception of the actual significance of doubt. This tendency manifests itself in an unjustifiable exaltation of the function of doubt. It seems to imagine that doubt in itself is a solution of an intellectual problem. It imagines that doubt is one of the final answers to questions of the mind. It magnifies doubt, in utter contradiction to its essential nature, into a positive principle as one of the constructive responses of the mind to its questions. Such a use of doubt leads one to seek it as an end or aim in his intellectual life. Those who are deceived into this way of thinking are not few. Like some atheists they assume that to deny the existence of God is to solve the problem of theism. All that such a type of atheism does is to reject one solution. The God problem still remains. At any rate it becomes neces-

## *The Significance of Doubt*

sary to propose some answer to the riddle of the universe. This form of doubt falls into the error of supposing that to deny one theory is to assert another. It fails utterly to distinguish between a positive explanation and blank nothingness. To deny a belief, to doubt it and assume that therefore you have arrived at a tenable conclusion, is like the school boy who finds his answer to an example in arithmetic inaccurate and consequently rubs his slate clean. In his temporary impatience, he may think that he has disposed of the troublesome thing, but the answer is still wanting. To make doubt an end in itself is acting precisely in the same manner. Doubt cannot, from the very nature of the case, serve as the end of one's intellectual life. To erect it into such a principle, is to set up an idol for the mind which must ultimately be shattered and leave its worshipper standing hopelessly confused amid the debris and dust. The inevitable consequence is utter skepticism, blank agnosticism and empty negativity. The human mind with its insatiable love of knowledge and truth cannot be satisfied permanently by this perverted idea of doubt. It demands a positive, constructive approach to the question of the universe. To assume, therefore, that doubt can serve as the end and ideal of thinking is fatal to all serious intellectual effort.

It is hoped that the preceding paragraphs express sufficiently the truth involved in the old interpretation of doubt. It certainly can-



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

not be defended as a permanent intellectual attitude. It has its evils, dangers and limitations. On the other hand, a desire to face frankly all of the facts in the problem, compels us to recognize that as a period of transition, doubt is often a necessity and fraught with much benefit and value to the individual. It is to this phase of the significance of doubt that we must now turn.

Unquestionably to some this point of view, that doubt is to be regarded as beneficial, will seem wholly indefensible. They may have become so accustomed to thinking of it as an evil, so imbued with the traditional notion that it is always to be tabooed, that any effort to establish it as a reputable feature of intellectual life may begin with a serious handicap. For any who may still have this feeling about doubt, it will be helpful to begin with a brief consideration of what doubt has actually meant to the progress of human thought. To theorize about it in current life may prove bewildering until we have seen some evidence of its value in the history of philosophy and its benefit to specific individuals. Historically it can be asserted that doubt, the tendency to suspend judgment until a full knowledge of the facts is in hand, to question everything which fails to comply with reason and experience, has proven most beneficial and valuable. In the short compass of a part of one chapter of a small volume it cannot be expected that the history of skepticism can be presented, critically

## *The Significance of Doubt*

interpreted and its consequent influence upon the history of thought completely traced out. It can be made clear, however, by the use of one or two obvious but pertinent illustrations that the person who has doubted has often proven eminently effective and powerful in his influence for good upon later thought.

There once lived a man who largely, if not absolutely, dominated the thought of Western Christendom. In his later life he shaped and molded the doctrines and beliefs of the Christian church. His thought was clear, definite and positive. He wielded a remarkable influence in all the great controversies of his day and his views and arguments almost invariably prevailed. He had a constructive system of thought which he elaborated at great length. His voluminous writings are still the field of scholarly and painstaking research. In short no one has ever conceived of the life and work of this man as lacking in a positive contribution to the thought of his day or marked by an absence of earnestness and conviction. Indeed, he would be accused of erring in the opposite direction if at all. His thought was vigorous, his analysis of problems fresh and vital, and his tone authoritative. He ranged over a very wide field of knowledge, expressing his conclusions with certainty and conviction. Problems of epistemology, theology, philosophy, metaphysics, biblical exegesis, ethics and countless practical issues of daily life were answered with wisdom and insight, but also



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

with authority and finality. Moreover, the impressive fact is that the system of thought which this man evolved continued to live long after its author. In fact it would be no exaggeration to extend our earlier statement by saying that he dominated the thought of Western Christendom for ten centuries. His writings served as the inspiration and guide of the church scholars until the time of Thomas Aquinas. Even today his thought holds sway over multitudes of minds. His general point of view and his interpretation of the universe strangely anticipated some of our modern conclusions. Some of the best of present day philosophers acknowledge their large indebtedness to this vigorous, constructive scholar of a far distant century. It is evident that we are describing some one who can be ranked among the foremost thinkers of all time. As the reader has probably anticipated, this man was St. Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo. But why should he be introduced at this juncture when we are endeavoring to show the value of doubt? Precisely because his life history amply illustrates this contention. St. Augustine's career as described by himself in his *Confessions* is of fascinating interest. It need not be repeated here. It is sufficient for our present purposes to recall how for more than a decade he lived a life of sensuousness and self-indulgence. In his earlier thought he was an open and avowed Manichean, that is, he believed in a dualistic universe controlled by two

## *The Significance of Doubt*

eternal powers of good and evil. Not finding any abiding satisfaction or inspiration in this system of thought, he gradually passed out into a period of doubt and skepticism. At this juncture, if not before, it would not have been difficult for his faithful mother, Monica, to have despaired of him and to have desisted from her prayers and importunities in his behalf. He doubted everything. He threw it all aside. His thought seemed hopelessly and utterly negative and barren. But finally while in this state he said: "Dubito ergo sum." His very doubt became the source of a new certainty. He saw clearly that the fact that he doubted gave him the knowledge of his own existence. "I doubt therefore I am," became for Augustine the beginning and foundation of the splendid and marvelous superstructure which he continued to enlarge and unify throughout his whole life. His period of doubt gave him the great foundation fact of his philosophy. A time of seeming negation and destructive meditation became the starting point of genuine certainty and constructive thinking. It is entirely in accord with the actual history of St. Augustine to assert that his skepticism and doubt became the source of his later thought. Because he doubted, he ultimately had convictions and principles which satisfied the cogent requirements of his mind. Doubt, in other words, was metamorphosed from a curse into a blessing. Augustine, the Manichean, by the path of Platonic skepticism and doubt became

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

the authoritative Christian scholar, theologian and philosopher.

Or again, if we should turn to any recognized work on the history of thought, such as the standard histories of philosophy and search for the thinker who is usually recognized as marking the beginning of modern philosophy whom would we find? This place is, by common consent, accorded to Descartes. For example, Dr. Albert Schweigler, in his *History of Philosophy* says: "The originator and father of modern philosophy is Descartes." If we endeavor to ascertain the reasons for this fact we shall find them in a method closely similar to that of St. Augustine. He began by refusing to accept anything which his predecessors had taught. He threw everything overboard. There was absolutely no fact of knowledge which he did not doubt or question. His endeavor was to begin *de novo*. He insisted upon being free from the errors, superstitions and assertions of all who had preceded him. He must make an absolutely new beginning. Where did he start? At a point so close to St. Augustine that it seems almost certain that the latter had exerted a determining influence upon him. He said: "Cogito ergo sum." In the very fact that he was a sentient creature he also found the certainty of his own existence. Just as St. Augustine based his philosophy on the statement "I doubt therefore I am," so Descartes, the founder of modern philosophy grounded his whole system on the assertion, "I think and

## *The Significance of Doubt*

therefore I am." It is not our task now to enter into any defense or criticism of the system of either St. Augustine or Descartes. The precise application now is this: Here are two of the most independent, original, constructive, influential thinkers of many centuries and both of them passed through periods of doubt. In fact out of their doubt came their certainty. Out of their questionings emerged the basal fact upon which they hung their whole systems. It is beyond contradiction that doubt, serious, honest, painstaking investigation of the problems of thought, proved most valuable and beneficial to both St. Augustine and Descartes and through them to mankind as a whole.

Now in the light of this brief rehearsal of the influence of doubt upon the history of thought, we should be prepared to recognize frankly the genuine value which a period of doubt may have for any honest and serious thinker. If our uncompromising ideal is the attainment of truth, if our fears for accepted beliefs do not over-ride our desires for reality, then we must admit that the true doubting of any intellectual theory or belief can ultimately only bring good results. Let us observe what some of these effects may be.

Speaking negatively, doubt often dispels ignorance, prejudice and superstition. If any belief is false, certainly our aim should be not to defend the belief by concealing its error, but by an accurate presentation of the facts, to reveal its falsity. Under no possible assump-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

tion, can it be accounted anything other than beneficial when by doubting men succeed in banishing error, conquering prejudice and dispelling superstition. The history of mankind at times seems to be the history of just such accomplishments as these. As a rule progress has usually resulted from some discriminating, vigorous thinker refusing to accept commonly accredited notions and ideas. For the time being, the feelings of conservative people may be offended but ultimately the doubt of some person will mean greater freedom and richer life for mankind as a whole. Martin Luther doubted the authority of the church and the Protestant Reformation resulted. Critical scholars questioned the authority of the Scriptures and a new era for Christian thought emerged.

Speaking positively, doubt often strengthens confidence in old theories and produces fresh and vital evidence for their essential truthfulness. When former conclusions are confirmed by new experiments and investigations we are prone to overlook the fact. Let us suppose that a person is led to doubt seriously some belief which we will assume for the sake of argument is true and perfectly in accord with the facts involved. What harm can his doubt produce? Only that for the time being he may be less valuable to society and may lead others into error. Ultimately, however, if he is a true doubter, if his investigations are accurate, he must emerge convinced of the truthfulness of



## *The Significance of Doubt*

the theory. Truth can never be destroyed by doubting it. When doubt shatters the idols of our den it is well, for thus do we escape from the bonds of error and find true freedom. When doubt shatters itself upon the unalterable rock of truth it is well, for thus do we find our convictions and appropriate our heritage from the past. To doubt either the true or the false can therefore only mean that truth will be enthroned.

Finally doubt seems to be the path by which a man arrives not so much at knowledge as at certainty, conviction, earnestness and tenacity in his beliefs and opinions. Doubt has been appalling to many just because they have not doubted. How pathetic it is to behold the awakening of a mind to the deeper problems of thought at a time in life when those questions should have been thought out and settled years before. If a man has accepted ready made his beliefs, sometime, earlier or later, he will become aware that those beliefs are not his. The boy who at first accepts unquestioned the teaching of his parents, will some day have to think them through for himself. No one can do it for him. There is no truth save as it is truth for us. The parent, therefore, should not be alarmed when the boy doubts. It is one sign of deep, virile thinking. It will be the method by which the beliefs of others really become his beliefs. He will not remain in this state of transition but by means of doubt transform his knowledge into certainties, convictions

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

and abiding verities. The man who has never doubted, has probably failed to grasp deeply the great questions of life. What man has not yearned for a more satisfying knowledge of duty and obligation, a more universal conception of God and a more adequate idea of personality? The man who is doubting is on the path to larger truth. Like those who have preceded him he will find the way out. The man who has doubted knows what his opinions and beliefs are. His knowledge has been transformed. It is now actually his. He clings to it with tenacity, firmness and conviction. While open to new truth, he is not easily deceived by subtle vagaries and specious fallacies. He has grounded himself, through actual appropriation of the truth, in certainty. A depth of thought and an earnestness of conviction mark all his intellectual life. Moreover, just because he has fathomed some problems, has seen the limits of human knowledge and sensed the great unknown realms beyond, he has a deeper respect for the realm of faith than those who have never doubted. He knows the point where "deepest doubt and highest faith" meet.

These then are some of the great values of a period of doubt. Back of all that has been said lies the assumption that the doubt is honest and genuine, that the individual involved is free from the false spirit and purpose described among the dangers arising from doubt



## *The Significance of Doubt*

and that it will prove, therefore, not to be a permanent state but rather the method by which he transforms his intellectual life. Consequently the significance of doubt is much more upon the positive than the negative side, more in its values than in its dangers. If it did not involve a false psychological method we could honestly congratulate any true doubter upon his condition. It reveals clearly that he is a vigorous, independent thinker, that he is unwilling to accept his knowledge or opinions ready made, that he is dissatisfied with unclearness and inaccuracy in thought and that finally he is to emerge as a constructive and useful thinker and scholar. Professor Royce goes so far as to say that, "As for doubt on religious questions, that is for a truth seeker, not only a privilege but a duty." This book assumes that many persons today have exercised that privilege and accepted that duty. If now we have arrived at a tenable interpretation of doubt, it seems natural that we should endeavor to go a little deeper into our problem and ask for the causes of our doubt. It must be remembered that out from our discussion of the question of doubt we hope to arrive at certain rather fundamental conclusions which will enable us to formulate a true intellectual attitude in this age of critical scholarship and consequent uncertainty and doubt for some. Let the reader remember, however, as we go forward that we have found doubt to be a much greater

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

good than evil, and that its dangers, for the sincere thinker, are completely overbalanced by its values. Doubt, by a strange paradox, thus becomes a positive factor in our quest for truth.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CAUSE OF DOUBT

WE have seen that for our present undertaking the man who doubts is at once the most interesting and the most significant product of an age of criticism. In our consideration of the problem of doubt we cannot be satisfied by any effort which merely interprets for us the meaning of doubt. Just because we have found such a period in intellectual development to be fraught with large possibilities for good or for evil, we must now endeavor to go deeper into the problem and find its real causes. If doubt has such a direct relationship to our knowledge, if it seems to be the path over which every honest searcher after truth must at some time travel, if with all its appearance of negativity and barrenness, it in reality becomes the method for acquiring positive knowledge and clear certainty, then we cannot understand it too thoroughly or be too familiar with any of the secrets which lie back of it. The modern point of view, in fact, would lead us to believe that we rarely understand anything until we have expressed it in terms of its causes. We have, in the last chapter,

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

come close enough to this intellectual state to see that it cannot be passed by as one of the aberrations of the mind but is in some way intimately and definitely related to all of our processes of acquiring knowledge. To search for its causes, therefore, may prove most helpful.

The reader at first, however, may naturally raise the question whether we have not gotten into a vicious circle in our thought. In this volume we started with a rehearsal of the facts sustaining the statement that we live in an age of criticism. We then described present conditions which hold before us as one of the results or accompaniments of an age of critical scholarship and investigation the person who doubts. At first, therefore, it would seem that what we have said is that criticism has produced doubt, or in other words that the cause of doubt is criticism. Is it not then beside the mark to begin now to devote two chapters to a consideration of the causes of doubt? Perhaps so, unless we may find new content in our age of criticism or see that between criticism and doubt lie the facts which thus far we have not described. But even these things we shall see are only upon the surface of our problem. We shall find that back of all the intellectual changes of our day, back of any method of the scholar, back of the thought terminologies of any generation, back of all the transformations, reformulations and developments of knowledge lie certain great basal facts which after all make doubt the constant problem that

## *The Cause of Doubt*

it is. We may find that it is inwrought in the very make of the universe and of our minds. This phase of our subject, however, we must reserve for the next chapter. It has been referred to at this juncture to assure the reader that we have not started on another turn around the same circle but are aiming directly toward the heart of our problem. Doubt is tremendously significant. Therefore, we want to see what light will come to us if we succeed in finding its causes. And in doing so we must constantly bear in mind our ultimate aim, namely, to arrive at a satisfactory intellectual attitude in our age of critical investigation and consequent shiftings of thought. It should be observed here that if we can succeed in establishing the real underlying secret of the cause of doubt we shall have prepared the way for the statement of our intellectual point of view. So much is said to assure the reader that we are on the direct path to our proposed destination. What then is the cause of doubt?

If we go back of our own generation, beyond what we have chosen to call an age of criticism, we can discern clearly the causes of our present period of doubt. Such a process helps us to recognize at once that the past century has been confronted by two great thought worlds essentially different and grounded in principles which are diametrically opposed to one another. If we compare Thomas Aquinas with Darwin, we perceive the difference at once. The contrast could not be greater. Their points of

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

view are absolutely separate. The peripheries of their thought worlds scarcely touch. The knowledge of the mediæval centuries was essentially static and mechanical. The whole background upon which modern knowledge and science have developed was rigid and unvaried. Mediævalism contributed to the present day a great mass of fixed conceptions and a congealed body of truth. The Aristotelian syllogism had been its great delight. Each generation passed on to its successor about the same bulk of truth, with few if any alterations, and with practically no material additions. The scholars of the middle ages were much farther from us in spirit than Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were. Suddenly upon this fixed background of knowledge, a background which in its essential principles and spirit had been altered but slightly for centuries, there began to appear marvelously new conceptions and ideas. The one word "science" with all that it implies in thoroughness, accuracy, spirit and ideal for the modern mind conveys a vivid impression of the change. When we contrast the mediæval scholar engaged in his philosophy, theology and logic, with the modern investigator absorbed by the experiments of his laboratory and determined to make some contribution to the world's knowledge and expand its borders, we have a concrete illustration of the differences in these two great thought worlds which within a comparatively brief period came into conflict. The evolutionary point of view has altered completely prac-



## *The Cause of Doubt*

tically all fields of knowledge. Not only the physical sciences, but ethics and theology have been reformulated in the light of this great master idea. Mankind no longer thinks of the world as coming into existence instantaneously, a final and finished product in response to the word of an infinite Creator, but rather as a great continuous process which is going on even now, a process in and through which God is expressing his life in this world. The conception of causation, the interpretation of all the universe in terms of cause and effect, has banished the old notion that the world was subject to the whim and caprice of an absentee God and replaced it by the splendid belief that we live in a world of law and order and that man can depend upon his environment. It has become obvious that the universe is one, that no line runs through it upon one side of which are natural occurrences and upon the other supernatural interferences. In other words mediæval ideas have been superseded by modern conceptions. Now when two such widely contrasted thought worlds were suddenly brought into juxtaposition, it is not astonishing that mental confusion and intellectual uncertainty arose. We have a period of doubt today because two great and widely separated systems of knowledge were rather speedily brought into conflict. The present generation has inherited this condition. The intellectual atmosphere of our day has taken its character from the century or more of storm disturbance which pre-



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ceded it. We can never remember too clearly that a whole age or generation does not move forward abreast in either the acquisition or acceptance of new truth. We are all at different points on the journey. Those of the advance guard may be inclined to look back in pity or humor upon the great body following them and they in turn may scoff at the laggards bringing up the rear. So today while our scholars, scientists and research workers are leading boldly forward, the great mass of mankind is still plodding on as best it can where the way is sometimes rough and the path fades with the light. Unquestionably one cause of doubt today is to be found in the aftermath of the great intellectual upheaval of the last century.

Perhaps there is no field in which the change occasioned more deep-felt disturbance or produced more widespread discussion than in biblical scholarship. Here was a literature which was absolutely unique within a realm which was holy and sacred. The Bible was God's word. It was final, authoritative and unerring. Its contents were there not because they were true, but were true because they were there. Whatever was said about history, astronomy, geology or ethics was the inspired utterance of God and therefore beyond question. As Auguste Sabatier says in his effort to describe the original Protestant dogma: "The Bible is a letter from God; form and matter, ideas and words, addressed from heaven to men. Inspiration is conceived as a supernatural dicta-

## *The Cause of Doubt*

tion." It is difficult for us today to go too far in stating the older attitude to the Scriptures. They were regarded as absolutely infallible and as the actual message of God to men. Man's part in their production was insignificant. He was simply the instrument, the pen which God used to write the message. Some of the older literature upon the Bible might lead us to infer that the Bible came to us directly from heaven written in the English language. In short, the Holy Scriptures were set up as the idol of the Christian. This fact was of more importance to the Protestant than to the Roman Catholic because the latter had also the authority of the Church. For the Protestant the Bible became the sole and unquestioned authority.

Now when criticism was applied to the Bible, its conclusions became the prolific source of the most disturbing and revolutionary doubt. It struck at the very heart of religious living. It seemed impossible to many to tolerate the process and as for the conclusions, they were not only irreverent, but damnable. At first it was directed chiefly toward the Old Testament. Among its conclusions, now commonly accepted, was that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but that the first books of the Bible showed clear evidence of at least four unknown hands. Because of certain literary and other characteristics of the writings, it became possible to identify them as the work of writers whom the critics called P, J, E, or D. These were in one

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

sense purely arbitrary symbols, but in another were determined by the character of the work they represented. For example P stood for the Priestly Code. The writer can remember distinctly the first time he saw a polychrome Bible intended to make clear at once the authorship of every verse of a book such as Genesis. Its many colors, each representing an author, were blended in most astonishing fashion. The work of higher criticism upon the prophetic writings likewise has been of the utmost value. In determining their authorship, date and composition, those books have been made to live in a new sense. Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah now stand out as the great mountain peaks of religious history. Let anyone who questions this assertion take such volumes as those of George Adam Smith upon the minor prophets and see how twelve books of his Old Testament have been reclaimed for him and made to speak a living, virile, spiritual message for today. The result is that one is not disturbed when reasons are presented which show clearly that certain verses in Amos are obviously not to be attributed to him, but to a later hand nor is he concerned over much because he finds the same passage both in Micah and Isaiah. It becomes perfectly evident that later scribes made alterations, additions and compilations in copying the manuscripts. For example, the book of Isaiah falls into two clearly defined parts at the end of the thirty-ninth chapter. The two portions thus produced are

## *The Cause of Doubt*

in turn found to be composed of writings coming from widely different periods. One fundamental question to be determined about many of the works of the Old Testament concerns their relationship to the period of the exile. It is usually quite possible to establish whether a book is pre-exilic, exilic or post-exilic. This test has determined the date of certain writings without question and enabled critics to arrive at totally new and enlightening interpretations of them as in the case of the book of Daniel. In the New Testament the same methods have been employed. The date and authorship of the various books have been determined with the greatest care. Naturally around the gospels has centered very deep and continuous interest. The unique relationship of Matthew, Mark and Luke has made the "synoptic problem" at once the most interesting and the most baffling of all the critical questions of the New Testament. If the reader desires to have first hand knowledge of the methods and spirit of a recognized critic in the New Testament field let him read Adolf Jülicher's Introduction to the New Testament. It is not our intention here to give even a summary of the results of modern criticism but simply by these obvious and universally accepted conclusions to show what a totally different attitude from that of an earlier day they represent to the Scriptures.

The modern point of view of the Bible seems to increasing numbers of people to be the natural and reasonable one. It conceives it to

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

be a group of books written in different languages at widely different periods of time (ranging from the eighth or ninth century B. C. to the second century A. D.) by many authors known and unknown. These books represent the greatest variety in religious experience and in the ethical standards of their writers. There is ample evidence of mistakes and errors, interpolations and alterations. These facts in no sense rob the Bible of its high spiritual value, but on the contrary the careful study and investigation of the critics give it a new meaning and authority. Now its contents are there because they are true and not simply true because they are there. Their authority is the authority of the truth which they contain. Their writers become living men with a burning message to their generation. When one takes a book such as Hosea, acquires a knowledge of the awful experience through which its author passed on account of the faithlessness of his wife, and then sees how, out of that experience of the prophet, there was born a message to the sinful and idolatrous generation of his day, a people whose love had proven false to its God, then we begin to see the reality of the message of these prophets. They were living men, speaking a living message to a living generation. Their souls were burdened with the demand for righteousness. Their denunciations of sins and cruelties, their calls for righteousness and justice were the very voice of God. "Thus saith Jehovah" carried with it the

## *The Cause of Doubt*

burning zeal of a suffering soul. The message of Amos is a rebuke of social injustice and a call for righteousness suited to the needs of the present hour. Those earliest prophets were close to the heart of life and the meaning of inner spiritual reality. Those books are the record of God's life in the lives of men. It is God's message in the deepest, most natural and most irresistible form. So both the old and the new view of the Bible recognize it as a book of the rarest quality in all questions of ethics and religion. But how wide is the chasm between the two interpretations and the two methods of approach! One mounts into the heavens and returns with the tablets of stone bearing the commandments of God, the other begins with God's life in the lives of his children and finds his message written on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Now any individual who has been taught and has accepted the usual traditional orthodox view of the Bible and then later in life is confronted by the modern critical conclusions must inevitably find himself at times disturbed, confused and doubting. Certainly higher criticism presenting its conclusions and interpretations of the Bible, so often utterly contradictory to former views, serves as an excellent illustration of the cause of doubt in our day, arising from the conflict of two opposing thought worlds.

But this change in attitude to the scriptures is only typical of the almost entire transformation of theological doctrines and beliefs. In



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

fact, just because new interpretations of the Bible have resulted from critical scholarship, it has become necessary to reformulate and reconstruct doctrinal beliefs and dogmas. The older theology endeavored to take full recognition of biblical data and when that data was altered reconstruction in theology was inevitable. Here again it is simply impossible to state in any detail the beliefs of the modern man. Great volumes are devoted to that field alone. In a later chapter at the proper point in our thought, we shall endeavor to give a very brief positive statement of the content of Christian belief from the modern point of view. At this juncture it will serve our purpose in tracing the cause of doubt to show the striking contrast between orthodox views and the new theology. Today distinct and widely accepted tendencies in Christian thought are deeply effecting men's minds. God no longer sits aloft far removed from the feverish life of man, but "in Him we live and move and have our being." In other words the present generation believes not only in a transcendent but an immanent God, not only in one whose life is above and beyond and apart from this world, but particularly one who is in His world and expressing His life by means of it. God is not only in the heavens, an infinite, righteous and holy Creator, but he is in this world, the eternal, loving and saving Father. Christ is no longer the center of metaphysical discussions, and vain endeavors to determine the mysteries of His person, now



## *The Cause of Doubt*

with an excessive emphasis upon His deity and a corresponding failure to sense His humanity and now with a new appreciation of His human nature and a tendency to minimize his Godward side. But as never before all our theology and beliefs are centered in the teachings and life of Christ. We are not now concerned so much with the question whether Christ is very God of very God, whether he is an inscrutable union of perfect God and perfect man, but our generation is permeated with the ideals and standards of Jesus. Our age believes that Christ was all God could be in human terms, a perfect revelation of both God and man. The primary fact about man today is not that he is a sinner, that he is lost, but that he may be a saint, that he may be found. Just as Christ taught, it is seen that man possesses infinite capacities for finding life. He is no longer regarded as the "wreck and ruin of a once fair and perfect harmony," but rather as a "chaos not yet reduced to order." He is not the pitiful shadow of an original pristine glory which departed when Adam sinned, but the evolving, developing son of the Father, the product of the toil of ages. Sin is conceived of not as the inevitable, ineradicable taint inherited from a representative man of ages gone by but as selfishness and lovelessness pure and simple, manifested in daily relationships with fellow men. Salvation is not a purchase whereby a human soul is saved from eternal punishment but it is the process of making a bad man here and now into a good one,

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ready to serve his day and generation. Punishment is not the edict of an infinite judge, but the inevitable penalty which inheres in all sin. The modern view asserts that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Forgiveness is not escape from penalty but the restoration of personal relationships. The authority of the Bible is the authority of the truth which it contains. Mankind kneels at the shrine of truth.

These shiftings of emphasis are fundamental. When the individual believer is brought face to face with them, he need not be surprised that they produce many questionings and that he finds himself in a period of fundamental and disturbing doubt. These changes strike at the very heart of the sources of spiritual and religious inspiration. They are more far reaching and significant than any generation has experienced since the days of Martin Luther. In our search for the cause of doubt, we must recognize again that it arises from the inevitable conflict of two essentially different thought worlds.

In concluding this chapter, we may bring out in clearer light the cause of doubt if we attempt to formulate for ourselves the problem which confronts the modern Christian. For we must not forget that it is in the field of religion that we meet the most serious form of doubt. What precisely is the intellectual task which the modern man must perform if he is to arrive at a satisfactory religious belief? We will under-

## *The Cause of Doubt*

stand the nature and difficulties of that task most readily and clearly by remembering the field of thought with which he deals. In doing so we need not minimize the difficulties involved in an intellectual mastery of any science or realm of knowledge. They all have their border problems, they all end in unanswerable questions and they all ultimately involve an explanation of the totality of being. But it is only fair to point out that the physical sciences have their tangible realities. The chemist can touch and see and handle the elements out of which many substances are compounded. The physicist deals with forces which he can measure and bring under his control. The astronomer struggles against all the limitations of space and time but he knows that he deals with a physical universe. Even the mathematician enjoys the satisfaction of cogent demonstration and unanswerable logic.

Over against all of these we must set the problem of the man who struggles for a satisfactory idea of the Christian religion. He is in another world. His concern is not so much that which *is* as that which *ought* to be. He deals more with ideals than with facts. But he must begin with the facts and try to explain them. In reality he endeavors to account for all existence. Although often unconsciously he is essentially a metaphysician, attempting to explain the universe. All the problems of philosophy are his, even though he may be ignorant of the term or scoff at the endeavors of the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

philosopher. He offers, as his explanation of existence, a Creator whom he calls Father, and thus seeks to relate man to God. He finds the best expression of both the Father and his children in Christ,—the one person who helps man to get an idea of God and to realize the rich possibilities of human life. All the questions that are gathered together under the terms philosophy, ethics and religion are the elements that go to make up the problem of the modern Christian. His task lies in the most difficult fields of thought. His problem is only adequately conceived when we remember that he struggles with the deepest question of human existence. His search at every point ends in mystery. We may not always fully realize it, but the indubitable, inevitable fact remains that the modern Christian deals with life's most complicated, intricate and baffling problem.

But unfortunately our modern Christian is not allowed to seek unhindered the answer to this question. Into this arena have entered two protagonists. One is aged. He has the strength, the confidence, the skill, the dignity of one at home in the conflict. He carries with him the impetus born of marvelous victories. For every emergency he has his method. For every attack he has his parry. His victories, his power, his age, merit and receive the plaudits of unnumbered myriads of people. To drop our figure, orthodoxy with its historic background, furnishes to the modern Christian well-trying, definite conceptions regarding the

## *The Cause of Doubt*

world, man, God, Christ, salvation and the future. A distinct thought world, with all the prestige of age and usefulness, occupies the minds of the great majority of Christians.

But this is not the only fact which complicates the religious problem of the modern man. Another protagonist has entered the arena. This combatant is youthful. To many he is unknown. His victories before the populace have not been numerous. Many, through false rumor, regard him as haughty, disdainful and lacking in respect for his opponent. It is conceded that he is deficient both in experience and definiteness of method. Yet withal he is animated by lofty motives and enjoys all the freshness, virility and vigor of youth. Again to speak baldly, modern scholarship, the critical method, the spirit of liberalism, has added a new element to the Christian's problem. Over against the fixed conceptions of orthodoxy an entirely new thought world springs into existence and demands recognition.

Our modern Christian, therefore, is confronted not only by the problems involved necessarily in the essential nature of his field of thought, but also by the fact that within that sphere he already finds two dominant conceptions which are, by virtue of their fundamental assumptions, engaged in inevitable conflict. That conflict, moreover, centers about the world's most sacred thought. It concerns the fondest hopes and noblest sentiments of the race. It deals with that element of man's life

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

which lies closest to his heart. Holy faith and sacred convictions enter in and complicate the problem. It is not a question which can be studied in a vacuum. It is related to life in the most intimate way. Here, then, is the problem of our modern Christian—to enter a field of knowledge peculiarly difficult because it endeavors to grapple with life's deepest questions, and there, in the presence of historic religious convictions and modern scientific conclusions which are often diametrically opposed to one another, endeavor to formulate an interpretation of life and the world which will satisfy at once the cogent requirements of the intellect, and the persistent demands of the human heart.

To state this problem of the modern Christian is to see in the most specific and concrete form the cause of doubt in the minds of numberless people today. It brings out in bold relief the conflict through which the thoughtful man must pass. It presents in definite form the issue for our day and hour which has resulted from rapid transformations of knowledge in many realms. We have endeavored to show in this chapter that the inevitable result of the sudden appearance of modern conceptions and systems of thought upon an essentially rigid and static background of mediæval knowledge was a vigorous and prolonged intellectual struggle. This great movement is amply illustrated by the full transformation of biblical theories and the complete metamorphosis of theological dogma. These facts are reflected



## *The Cause of Doubt*

very specifically in the problem which confronts the modern Christian. In the light of these conditions, it is obvious why doubt is so prevalent, and why multitudes are seriously disturbed in their religious thinking. The conflict of two great thought worlds has been the cause for our generation of deep and prolonged doubt. We cannot pause here, however, for as has been intimated already there is a deeper and more significant consideration to which the next chapter is devoted. Why did men doubt before the present conflict arose. Why do all thinking men in any generation doubt?



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CAUSE OF DOUBT (*Continued*)

WE are now reaching the heart of our problem. In our main effort to formulate our intellectual attitude in an age of criticism we were forced to consider the meaning of doubt and then to undertake a search for its causes. Doubt emerged as the most significant element of an age of critical scholarship and any effort to establish a worthy response to that age could not disregard this troublesome factor. We have seen that doubt possesses great potentialities for our intellectual lives, that while it has its dangers, and seems to be a negative and destructive force, by some strange metamorphosis it becomes highly beneficial to earnest thinking and frequently productive of genuine knowledge and abiding certainty. In our quest for the cause of doubt we have found that it is an inevitable concomitant of the struggle between two radically different thought worlds—a struggle which has become acute in the fields of biblical literature and theology.

But we must admit frankly that to place the cause of doubt in this conflict alone is to fail utterly to comprehend the depth and nature of

## *The Cause of Doubt*

the problem of doubt. We have been dealing only with surface facts and causes. We have been describing the obvious features of the situation, the things upon which the man who doubts is himself prone to place the emphasis. It has been necessary to state them both because they are among the causes of doubt and because their omission would instantly sever our connection with the actual experience of the doubting individual.

One cause of doubt does lie where we placed it in the last chapter, but now we must leave the surface and go to the very depths of our question. It will become evident at once why our consideration of the cause of doubt has been separated into two chapters,—the first one has dealt with the acute situation of the present generation which has precipitated the whole problem of doubt for many individuals today, while this chapter endeavors to go back of all the temporary conditions of our day, beyond the conflict of present thought worlds and varying terminologies, beyond the intellectual upheavals caused by striking discoveries of new truth, beyond all changes, transformations and developments of knowledge to the very heart of the question—namely, the inevitable conditions of all knowledge involved in the very terms of the problem. Doubt is certain when a finite mind endeavors to grasp an infinite universe. Doubt is inwrought in the very make of the world and in the obvious limitations of our human intellects. In other words the limits of knowledge

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

are certain and eternal. We may expand our field of knowledge from time to time, we may enlarge our understanding of the universe, we may push the frontier of truth a little farther with each generation but with every step we only become more conscious of our imperfections and limitations. Knowledge is limited, man's craving for truth is insatiable, the inevitable result is increasing knowledge, wider boundaries of truth, but beyond those boundaries new questions and more serious problems. Knowledge always ends in mystery. We cannot escape it. The man who thinks clearly and deeply must doubt at times.

Now it is necessary at this juncture to make quite sure that the reader is not overwhelmed with what may seem to him to be pure negation and agnosticism. This aspect of our thought is apparent rather than real. It will become the very means by which we find the way out to a worthy intellectual attitude. To assert unqualifiedly that doubt is inevitably involved in the very conditions of human knowledge may at first seem appalling, depressing and pessimistic. We must remember, however, our conclusions already stated in our search for the significance of doubt and more particularly we need to think clearly about the sort of intellectual tasks which can satisfy us. Here, as everywhere in the realm of ideals, it is only the unattainable task which can provide us with abiding inspiration. The glory of the intellectual life lies just here that it has an unend-

## *The Cause of Doubt*

ing, ever growing and expanding realm in which to work. Suppose that conditions of knowledge were such that man could know everything, that no question remained unanswered, that no new truths were available, that nowhere in the whole universe there was anything he did not understand, and in short that all mystery had vanished. What would be the result? We would despise intellectual pursuits. They would fail utterly to inspire or thrill us. Why is it that today throughout the world there are men and women struggling intently to acquire new truth? Simply because they can never acquire it fully, just because they can acquire a little more every day. Here is the secret of the scholarly career, here is the lure of literature, art, music, science and all truth—man can never fully attain it, he always has more to do, his effort is always rewarded. As Professor George Herbert Palmer once expressed it in a lecture, “It seems to say to you, you can never get there. In reality it says you can get there every day.” It seems to discourage you, in reality it inspires you. Therefore, to say that doubt is an inevitable part of our intellectual life may seem at first thought to be a pure negation, but on the other hand it is only an honest, fearless acceptance of the condition of all knowledge which assures us that careful, painstaking efforts to acquire the truth will not go unrequited. It is not the author’s intention to go into a philosophical discussion of the theories and limits of knowl-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

edge, but by certain cogent illustrations to establish beyond all possibility of contradiction the assertion that the cause of doubt lies imbedded in the make of the universe and the nature of our minds. Limited knowledge means mystery and for the thinker mystery means doubt.

### SELF.

Let us begin with that which lies closest at hand. If the reader will try to select the one fundamental thing of which he feels the most certainty, and if he thinks long enough, he will, in all probability, conclude that while he has many opinions and beliefs, his greatest certainty does not concern the world, or his fellow men, or his deity or any of the great eternal hopes and convictions of the human heart. The thing of which he is surest is himself. As it was with St. Augustine and Descartes, so will it be with most individuals. The great central certainty will be their own existence. In the presence of the greatest mystery and intellectual darkness most men can arise and say of this one thing there can be no question, "I am." Now let the reader cling to that certainty, for he is right. It has been the great fundamental truth of philosophical systems for centuries. We may argue and reason and doubt but we rarely question our own existence.

Now that we have that fixed pivot around which we may rotate, let us begin to see just what we do know about ourselves that gives us

## *The Cause of Doubt*

such unqualified assurance. Perhaps we shall find that all about that central certainty there lies a great unknown world. Has the reader ever thought definitely about his origin? The question is not intended to raise the whole biological issue nor does it concern his place in an evolutionary explanation of animal life. It simply asks where he thinks he came from. If he chooses, it may be made to refer particularly to what one calls himself, his spirit or his soul. As one American poet wrote of Shakespeare:

“How was his body bred we know full well.

But that high soul’s engendering who can tell.”

Where does the reader think he received what he calls his real self? Now two distinct schools of thought return answers to that question. One holds that when the body was born the Creator of spirits provided it with a soul. The other that it was produced by the parents just as the body was. The former idea is hardly satisfactory for it involves anthropomorphic difficulties in one’s conception of a Creator, while the latter theory smacks of such crass materialism that it is repelling. The former explanation is called creationism and the latter traducianism, but after all they are only names for the problem. They explain nothing. No one lives or has lived who has given any commonly accepted or satisfactory explanation of the origin of the individual. The whole subject runs off into mystery. We know that as individuals we are inseparably linked with one



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

another and with the past, we believe that we are all children of the Father, but beyond these conclusions we live in doubt.

Or if the question of origin must be given up, let the reader, still clinging tenaciously and justly to the certainty of self, endeavor to decide what he knows about the constitution of man, about the way he is organized. Perhaps here the most obvious assertion is that he is a body and a spirit. But just how are those two elements related? The psychologist will reply that a physical change is accompanied by a psychical change and vice versa. But what bridges that chasm? How does the mind operate upon the body or the body upon the mind? That they do, is a part of our certain knowledge, but how is this result achieved? The psychologist may call it psycho-physical parallelism, but that again is only naming the problem or the facts. It explains nothing. The scholars have struggled long and patiently to solve that question, much light has been cast upon it, many theories have been evolved, many phases of truth have been discovered, but the whole subject remains almost as great an enigma as ever.

Or perhaps the reader says, "I am sure of conscience." Undoubtedly it is one of the most essential elements in the constitution of man. We do have much clear knowledge of it. Practical wisdom alone assures us that the voice of conscience must be obeyed, that its dictates are sacred and that to disregard it means the ulti-

## *The Cause of Doubt*

mate disintegration of character. But what a mysterious, inscrutable, perplexing thing it is even when its owner yearns to obey it. Is it something which is acquired or is it intuitive? Does it always tell one what to do or is it sometimes indefinite? Is it infallible or does it make mistakes? Is it supreme or must it obey reason? Is it universal or does it vary with nations and individuals? When we consult the scholars what do we find? Bishop Butler, Kant, Fichte, Mill, Spencer, Darwin, Martineau, Paulsen and many others have given us the most varied and sometimes contradictory opinions. For example, Bishop Butler says in one of his sermons, "Everyone may find within himself the rule of right and obligation to follow it." Kant insists that "conscience is not a thing to be acquired and it is not a duty to acquire it, but every man, as a moral being has it originally within him." Or again he says "an erring conscience is a chimera." "What duty is, is plain to everyone," and "the commonest intelligence can easily and without hesitation see" what the moral law demands. On the other hand, writers such as Mill, Spencer and Darwin insist that conscience is a thing acquired either by the individual or the race. Professor Paulsen in his *System of Ethics* disagrees with Kant by saying, "It is certainly not true that no one is ever in doubt as to what duty demands. In many cases, of course, our duty seems perfectly clear immediately, but by no means in all." The experience of every in-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

dividual attests the conclusions that conscience is always present but that it sometimes makes mistakes, sometimes fails to speak precisely, for we are often in the throes of moral decisions and conflicts of duties, and sometimes changes with new experience and new knowledge. Every growing individual frequently subjects conscience to reason and is often confronted by different standards not only among different nations but among individuals of the same nation. Conscience seems to be both intuitive and acquired, but with all our effort to explain it there will always be problems and mysteries. No general agreement has been reached in the effort to interpret conscience. The question like many others ends in doubt and uncertainty.

Or the reader may say, "I admit that I know little of my origin, of the relation of body or spirit or of my conscience, but I do know I am a free man. I can do what I choose to do and my freedom no one can question, for it is a matter of my own experience." But let us come nearer to this assumed certainty. The problem of freedom has perplexed every generation of thinkers. Plato, Augustine, Aquinas, Jonathan Edwards and Palmer are only representatives of the long list of philosophers who have endeavored to solve this enigma. One of the most helpful recent treatments of this subject is Professor George Herbert Palmer's *The Problem of Freedom*. Today we are no longer confronted by the theory that our ac-

## *The Cause of Doubt*

tions are determined solely by our environment. This doctrine, called necessarianism, was advocated by the materialistic and atheistic thinkers but has now practically vanished. In its place comes a far more formidable contestant. This doctrine, called determinism, asserts that a man's actions are the product of his own character and his environment. It endeavors to take full account, not only of the causes outside of a person, but also of those within him. The determinist says that if we recognize the presence of causation in the outer universe, we should apply it also to the inner world. If cause and effect hold in astronomy, chemistry and physics, they must also be recognized in psychology. The reign of law is insisted upon both within and without the person. On the other hand the man who believes in the freedom of the person, called a libertarian, insists that our actions are the result of our own choices. Julius Müller defined freedom as follows: "It is essential to freedom that the act called free might either have been left undone or might have been substituted by another, even the opposite, and that the choice between these possibilities rests solely with the acting subject. The essence of this conception of freedom is the exclusion of necessity, inward as well as outward." The heart of the whole problem is recognized in that definition. It states the issue clearly and unqualifiedly. It asks whether the individual really has a clear alternative, whether he is free from both inner and outer

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

compulsion. Professor Palmer states it more concisely when he says "freedom is that self-guidance by which for purposes of my own, I narrow a future multiple possibility to a single actual result." It becomes clear that the precise issue centers in causation. The determinist insists upon the principle of causality. He has an orderly, law-abiding, unified world. It is not full of chance and caprice determined by the whims of individuals. The libertarian readily accepts this principle but questions the universality of its range. The determinist believes that the future is certain while the libertarian thinks it is uncertain, depending upon the choice of the individual. The determinist maintains that no future ambiguities exist while the libertarian actually believes there is an alternative for him. The libertarian asserts that occasionally, even if very rarely, he makes an absolutely new beginning.

Now it cannot be questioned that there are large elements of truth in determinism. It is universally conceded that the external world is under the rule of uniform laws. It seems difficult, if not impossible, to prevent the psychologist from pushing this principle within the inner realm as well. The law of averages as applied to human action and the possibility of predicting the conduct of individuals seem to help support this theory. On the other hand, the libertarian retreats within an impregnable citadel when he insists that his freedom is simply a fact of self-consciousness. He



## *The Cause of Doubt*

knows it is so. While the determinist studies others, the libertarian considers himself.

Doubtless the most satisfactory approach to a solution lies in a careful scrutiny of the term causation. Here is the source of most of the misunderstanding and disagreement. Possibly the way out lies in a definition of causation in terms of personality. As Professor Bowne says in his *Theory of Thought and Knowledge*: "The causality of freedom means self-determination. This is a causality which looks to the future and is not driven by the past. It is a causality which forms ideals and plans, and devotes itself to their realization. Instead of being shoved out of the past, it is self-moving into the future. . . . Our experience of such causality is limited to the inner life, but is in fact the only form of proper causality of which we have any experience whatever. . . . We find what we seek in the free and purposive agent, the only real explanation of anything." Perhaps therefore the greatest weakness of determinism lies in a rather hazy conception of causation while its strength consists in its logical and strong insistence upon a uniform and law-abiding universe including the human person. Probably the most serious error of libertarianism lies in the implication that we live in a world of chance while its incontrovertible position is that freedom is a datum of self-consciousness and that the individual feels no such compulsion or limitation as the determinist affirms.



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

It becomes perfectly obvious that no one is in a position to be dogmatic upon this problem of freedom. It is one of the most complicated and baffling subjects to which the mind has been directed. Dr. Henry Sidgwick in his *Method of Ethics* states both the deterministic and libertarian arguments and finally concludes that both may be sustained logically. In fact, while determinism has gained ground rapidly, libertarianism has been wisely modified until the two schools meet in many respects upon common ground. But the greatest divergence of opinion prevails, and evidently this condition will continue, for when we confront this subtle problem we are face to face with another of life's mysteries.

Before we conclude our consideration of the constitution of man, it may put beyond all further question our contention that doubt is involved in the very conditions of all our knowledge, if we present some of the facts which show that personality occasionally manifests itself in inexplicable forms, and that we all live close to the border land of mystery. We do not refer now to irrational or insane abnormalities but to those weird and fascinating cases which the psychologist describes as "multiple personality." Anyone interested in full details of several such cases can find them described in James' *Principles of Psychology*, Volume I. in the chapter entitled "The Consciousness of Self." Bearing in mind our present purpose, it is impossible here to deal at

## *The Cause of Doubt*

length with many of these illustrations. Indeed, one must suffice. The Rev. Ansel Bourne of Greene, R. I., is selected, both because the case is accurately described by Professor James, and because the writer has talked with trustworthy parties who knew Mr. Bourne. He was taught the trade of a carpenter, but just before he became thirty years of age he turned from atheism to Christianity and thereafter devoted himself to the work of the Christian ministry. He apparently was a man of honesty, integrity and truthfulness. Professor James says "his character for uprightness is such in the community that no person who knows him will for a moment admit the possibility of his case not being perfectly genuine." On January 19, 1887, after drawing the sum of five hundred and fifty-one dollars from a bank in Providence, he took a Pawtucket horse-car. At this juncture something happened to him. Doubtless it was apparent to no one in the car. But Mr. Bourne disappeared and was not heard from for almost two months. During this time a man, purporting to be A. J. Brown, arrived at Norristown, Pennsylvania, and established a small stationery and confectionery store. For six weeks he conducted this business "without seeming to anyone unnatural or eccentric." On March 14th, however, he suddenly awoke and asked where he was. He said that he was Ansel Bourne, that he knew nothing of the store or of Norristown and told of his experience at the bank in Providence as though it

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

had just happened. He could not be convinced that he had been there so long nor that almost two months had passed since he left Providence. Naturally at first he was regarded as insane, but upon telegraphing to Rhode Island, a relative appeared at once who adjusted matters satisfactorily and took Mr. Bourne home.

Six weeks of the time was fully accounted for by his presence in Norristown. But having once "resumed his normal personality," Mr. Bourne had no recollection of any of the time which had elapsed. Two weeks were thus entirely lost and unexplained. It is interesting to observe that a man who had never been trained for business should have turned to it with apparent success. Those who knew "A. J. Brown" at Norristown characterized him as "orderly in his habits and in no way queer." Perhaps the strangest feature of all his conduct during those two months was that he attended a prayer meeting at which he spoke, relating an experience which occurred during his normal state. In June, 1890, Professor James hypnotized Mr. Bourne and in the state of hypnosis he remembered with astonishing clearness all of the details of his Norristown experience and could tell with accuracy of the events of the two weeks which up to that time had remained a mystery. While in the hypnotic trance he could remember nothing of what happened before or after the Norristown escapade. He said: "I'm all hedged in; I can't get out at either end. I don't know what set

## *The Cause of Doubt*

me down in that Pawtucket horse-car, and I don't know how I ever left that store, or what became of it." Professor James endeavored to use every possible device of suggestion to combine the two personalities but without avail. He says: "Mr. Bourne's skull today still covers two distinct personal selves."

Such personalities as these make life seem weird and unreal. Our utter inability to understand or explain them satisfactorily only emphasizes the truth that all our problems are surrounded by mystery and shrouded in darkness. If it were necessary, we could continue this process and describe such personalities as Mary Reynolds, the melancholy woman of Pennsylvania who alternated back and forth between states of excessive melancholy and extreme mirth and who finally spent her last years in her second state. Save as her friends and relatives informed her when in one state, she had no knowledge of the other. Or we could consider the woman who had three personalities. In the first state she knew only herself. In the second state she knew herself and the person of the first state. In the third state she knew herself and the persons of the first and second state. Our psychologists endeavor to account for these facts but it is with extreme difficulty that tenable hypotheses are formulated. The terms "alternating" or "multiple" personality only name the problem. They do not explain it. Personality is engulfed in mystery.

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

But if we are in uncertainty concerning both the origin and constitution of self, we face even greater difficulties when we raise the question of our destiny. The reader clinging earnestly and rightly to the certainty of self, finds even more baffling issues as he turns to the future. The best men of all generations have confidently anticipated a future life. It seems impossible that the human spirit is entirely conditioned by the physical body, that man who is the crown of creation, the product of the toil of the ages should be snuffed out by death, that the child of the Father should cease to exist, and that man's aspirations and hopes here should not be more fully realized in the life beyond. But immortality cannot be established by logical deductions. Man may hope for it, but he cannot prove it. It is an utter impossibility to demonstrate by any method of "rigor and vigor" that man is immortal. We may establish by mathematical accuracy and cogency of reasoning that 2 plus 2 equals 4 but the belief in man's future existence cannot be surrounded by any such certainty. From the time of Socrates to the present the whole subject has been shrouded in mystery. These assertions must not be misinterpreted. They are not intended to be arguments against immortality, but evidences that our belief in that doctrine cannot be logically and mathematically sustained. Man's holy convictions and undying aspirations give us great confidence. Our belief in Christ and our trust in a loving Father

## *The Cause of Doubt*

give us assurances which are satisfying. With these words Tennyson has voiced this universal sentiment:

“Thou wilt not leave us in the dust;  
Thou madest man, he knows not why;  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And thou hast made him: thou art just.”

Confidence of this sort depends largely upon the high quality of one's living. As Professor William Newton Clarke says: “All low, worldly and unspiritual life tends toward doubt of it, and all high living tends to belief in it. The stronger and more vital the conviction that there is a living God, the surer does it seem that man, his spiritual offspring, must partake in his unalterable life. The higher the spiritual quality in men, the stronger grows this expectation.” And yet we must not confuse belief with knowledge or opinion with certainty. While we have our confidence that man does not die, we must not expect that it can be established logically or sustained scientifically. The data is not available. Man's destiny too is shrouded in mystery.

Now all of this is amply sufficient to sustain our argument in regard to self. No matter in which direction we turn we find ourselves confronted by long vistas extending into unknown realms. We must frankly admit that with all our advancements in knowledge, we know but little about the origin, the constitution or the destiny of man. And yet we must never forget



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

that this affirmation concerns the subject of which we are most certain. In the presence of these baffling mysteries and eternal enigmas we can arise and insist upon the certainty of self. We need now to be extremely clear in our thinking. This line of thought is presented not for the purpose of disproving our knowledge of self or of overwhelming us with the mysteries of our person. Unless we are cautious, that will be the unfortunate result because more material has been presented to show the uncertainties than the certainty of self. The nature of our task in dealing with the cause of doubt has compelled that method. We must remember, however, that the precise point is this: Even our greatest certainties are connected with problems which the mind cannot solve. Just as surely as a person thinks deeply, so surely will he come face to face with mystery and doubt. The universe is so constituted that man's mind cannot solve all its questions. In the presence of all the mystifying, disturbing and baffling problems of personality we are still certain of our own selves. The casual, surface thinker is unconscious of the out-lying regions of his person, but the earnest, serious inquirer inevitably comes upon the rigid limits of his own knowledge. We may all know *that* we exist, but *how* or *why* we are as we are leads us straight into the eternal mysteries of life. The assertion "I am," the certain consciousness of self, this is one of the foundation facts of all philosophy and all knowledge. Even in the

## *The Cause of Doubt*

presence of life's deepest problems, the thinker is justified in clinging to it tenaciously and with conviction.

### GOD.

Now let us endeavor to establish the same truth by passing to the opposite pole of the diameter of being. If we were to base our argument here solely upon the facts or mysteries of man's origin, constitution and destiny, we might fail to convince the reader of the universality of our position. Instead, therefore, of thinking of the finite individual let us consider the Infinite. Let us turn from man to God.

In the last analysis, the theistic problem calls for an explanation of all being. It asks for the ground of the universe, the cause which lies back of all that is, and an interpretation of the totality of existence. It is not simply the question whether we believe in the existence of God, it is the ineradicable demand of the intellect and heart of man for some explanation of all the facts of life and the world. It is not our intention here to present any of the arguments for theism or to endeavor to establish the existence of God. It is our desire, however, to show that by the very terms of the problem, man is forced to confront again the inevitable limits of his knowledge. What are we attempting when we approach this problem of God? We are seeking for the explanation of an infinite universe, endeavoring to formulate for ourselves a satis-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

factory conception of an infinite Creator, attempting to find a personality, not partial but perfect, to whom we can attribute all of the highest qualities of holiness, righteousness, justice and love. Moreover, we are trying to do all of this by means of our own little finite minds. By the very conditions of the effort, we are attempting an impossibility. In our finiteness we can never fully grasp the Infinite. If God is to be God, if he is to satisfy our craving for ultimate truth and if he is to be the infinite Creator who sustains and governs the universe, then he must be something more than our human finite minds can conceive. Consequently our knowledge of God is limited. We have no right to hope for a full and exhaustive understanding of His nature and life. We can never grasp Him in all His fullness. The great abyss of His being lies entirely beyond our limited powers of knowing.

Shall we then give Him up? As someone has suggested shall we take Him to the frontiers of the universe and bow Him out of existence? Because we cannot comprehend Him completely shall we reject Him entirely? Because we cannot enjoy the light of noon-day shall we despise the glories of dawn or twilight and stumble about in the darkness of midnight? Let us suppose for the instant that we do reject theism. Where do we find ourselves? If we are logical in our thinking we must see that without God, the universe is a machine, thinking collapses,

## *The Cause of Doubt*

knowledge vanishes, personality is gone and the sooner we desist from thinking and philosophizing, the more consistent we are. If the universe is not grounded in a person, then we are automata and life's hopes, dreams and aspirations are myths. Life itself becomes a tragic joke and a stupendous phantom. Instantly we reach out to bring God back. Although, by His very nature He transcends completely the powers of our little minds to grasp Him, nevertheless we must have Him. He alone satisfies the deepest yearnings of our souls. Without God, we vanish as free, loving creatures. The God problem by its very terms compels us to face mystery, and to gaze upon vast realms of the unknowable but even so there must be a God. Again, at the center of great eternal mysteries we find certainty of belief and conviction. We see that the real fundamental cause of doubt is found in the conditions of all knowledge.

### EVIL.

Perhaps the most distressing and complicating problem of all thought is evil. We have been considering both Man and God. It may add a final impetus to our contention if now we endeavor to consider the relationship of the finite and the Infinite and take that particular aspect of it where it is subjected to the severest strain. Elsewhere, in a volume entitled *The Problem of Evil*, the author has discussed this

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

question at some length. Here it is only necessary for our present purposes to state it in briefest outline.

Evil naturally and logically falls into two main groups. The universe at times seems full of forces which operate in utter disregard of the welfare of man. Cyclones destroy property and lives, earthquakes devastate cities and swallow multitudes of men, tidal waves lay waste the beautiful places, lightning and hail storms rob man of the products of his toil. All about us are great uncontrollable agencies which in their operation completely contradict the notion that man's interests and life are of supreme worth. The world at times seems heartless and cruel. John Stuart Mill's arraignment of nature is often justified by the actual experience through which we pass. This phase of our problem is called natural evil. Its apex is reached when we think of heredity and death. When we consider the fact that countless numbers of innocent children are brought into this life apparently condemned beforehand to lives of vice and crime, it seems utterly contradictory to our fundamental beliefs that we live in a universe grounded in justice and love. How can such ideals be mentioned with any plausibility when we contemplate the pain, the suffering and the sorrows of mankind. The one word "death" carries in its bosom more woes and heart aches than mankind is able to comprehend. It is not difficult to discourse about death in a coldly intellectual fashion, to

## *The Cause of Doubt*

point out that it is necessary for historic life, that it is but the entrance to new life, that it is the beginning and not the end of a career; but to stand in its presence, to feel sympathetically the shudders of the stricken, to face practically the difficulties of a shattered home where the provider has suddenly vanished, then it is that the lips are sealed in sympathetic silence and death assumes a new meaning. Such experiences help us to sense partially the depths of the problem of evil.

Above or below these natural evils lies the revolting and repelling field of moral evil or sin. It includes all of the intemperance, the impurity, the vice and crime which corrupt our flesh and destroy our souls. Here must be classified all of the emotions and passions which mar our lives and rob us of righteousness—all the envy, the jealousy, the hatred, the malice and the pride of life. Here must be mentioned all the unreality, the insincerity, the dishonesty and the hypocrisy of the world. Here must be placed all the smallness, the narrowness, the selfishness and lovelessness of man. Beyond all of these lies the ever-widening circle of social sins, born of the complex, interdependent civilization of our day.

Any honest thinker who considers the long list of natural and moral evils cannot fail to be disturbed by them and to ask why they exist. Why must mankind be harassed by the physical forces of nature? Why should the world be so full of sin and crime? Why must men



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

suffer such pain and sorrow? Or if there must be pain why must there be so much of it? Why has nature been so prodigal in thrusting these evils upon us? Back of all these perplexing questions lies the still more baffling issue of the origin of these evils. Whence have they come? Did God originate them, and if not, did he permit them? If so, are we as human individuals responsible for their continuance. Again it becomes evident that the deeper we go the more uncertain we become.

The world's deepest thinkers from Plato onward have struggled with this problem but no one has solved it. The natural evils of life do present an enigma. Nevertheless, the great historic truth remains that by natural evils man has been taught many of his most needed lessons. Thinkers like LeConte and Paulsen insist that the meaning of physical or natural evil can be found in the education of the race. That natural evil has been necessary for man's intellectual development is the contention of this point of view. When we come to moral evil it can be asserted without qualification that the possibility of its existence was necessary for man's ethical and spiritual development. In all reverence, it may be said that if God were to create a moral universe, then the possibility of moral evil was a necessity. There can be no morality without the possibility of immorality. Innocence is not virtue. No child can obey unless he has the option of disobeying. We therefore begin to see why sin may have

## *The Cause of Doubt*

entered our universe. Moral evil once here may become our best means to higher moral life. It is here to be conquered and overcome. Every temptation is a challenge to our moral manhood and an open door admitting to nobler life. Moral evil therefore seems to be the necessary prerequisite of a moral universe. The awfulness of the actuality of sin we can never exaggerate but on the other hand we must not fail to recognize the necessity of its possibility for a spiritual universe. Man's glory is revealed in the dual possibility given him by his Creator. His discredit is his partial failure to be worthy of such a heritage. In view of these statements must we not alter somewhat our attitude to evil? Is evil only evil? Or rather is painless, sorrowless life our ideal of the good life? Is happiness the necessary synonym of goodness? Is life a mere effortless span of existence? Does he live best who experiences none of the woes and trials of life? May we not find that there is good in evil. Paradoxical as it may appear, could life be good without evil?

"Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt and taints of blood;

"Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

## Our Intellectual Attitude

"So runs my dream; but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night:  
An infant crying for the light  
And no language but a cry."

Tennyson here expresses the certain confidence of those who believe that we live in a universe where goodness is enthroned, but he also recognizes the mystery and the doubt which center in evil.

With all the numberless phases of mystery involved in this awful problem of evil we must not forget that certainties exist at the heart of the question. We frankly admit without qualification that we simply cannot explain each specific case which falls under the problem of evil. If the mother asks why *her* child must die, we cannot answer. If the merchant inquires why *his* property was destroyed, we do not know. But back of all the mysteries and uncertainties we do know that evil exists to be overcome and cast down, that sin must be conquered, that we are responsible for the evil deeds we commit, and that whatever may be our metaphysical interpretation of evil, however we may endeavor to explain its presence in the universe, there is but one response which we can make to it. We know that we must accept the challenge of evil and throw our whole strength into its mastery and subordination. Again at the center of unsolved problems we find unquestioned certainty.

Finally we must insist upon a clear understanding of the argument of this chapter. We

## *The Cause of Doubt*

are searching for the cause of doubt—a cause which lies far beneath the thought transformations or changing terminologies of any generation. We have said that the real abiding cause of doubt is to be found in the conditions which lie back of all knowledge. We have insisted that doubt is an inevitable concomitant of the existing organization of the world and man's intellect. We have endeavored to show that the cause of doubt is to be found in the very constitution of the universe and inwrought in the limitations of man's mind. We have sought to establish this contention by dealing with three of the most certain but at the same time most confusing subjects of human thought. Self, God and evil because of their intrinsic characteristics and because of their interdependent relationships afford just the illustrative material which enables the reader to grasp at once the undeniable truth that for any thinking person doubt is inevitable. All of our most significant intellectual problems end in realms with which we are not familiar and into which we cannot force ourselves even with the greatest effort. Therefore in our search for the cause of doubt we must find it not alone in the thought conflicts of our day, but especially in the obvious limitations of man's knowledge. Doubt is inwrought in our whole intellectual fabric. We are now prepared in the light of these conclusions to formulate our intellectual attitude in an age of criticism and doubt. Bearing these results in mind, what point of

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

view should the honest searcher after truth assume in the midst of thought transitions and in the presence of problems which have baffled all mankind? How shall he approach his intellectual tasks?

## VII

### OUR INTELLECTUAL ATTITUDE

**WE** can now begin to be more constructive. If at times our thought thus far has seemed negative and destructive we can only express the hope that the character of our problem has justified it. To fail in recognizing the real nature of the difficulties involved in our subject would mean that we could not expect to claim the interest of the man who is experiencing those very difficulties. Such problems as those with which we have been dealing cannot be brushed easily aside. We have aimed to recognize fully and fearlessly the depth of our problem and to set it forth in all its seeming negativity in order that thereby we might find it possible to arrive at a positive principle which would help us to live with our intellectual perplexities. Such is the aim of this chapter. We shall endeavor to do precisely what the title of the book itself calls upon us to do. In the light of our study of an age of criticism and the problem of doubt we now propose to undertake the statement of a tenable and satisfying intellectual spirit or point of view. This attitude is intended to be valid not only for religion



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

but for our intellectual life as a whole. It must be a point of view serviceable in every realm of thought or it is useless in any field. It will naturally have various phases or aspects and these will be couched in a terminology somewhat determined by our earlier chapters. It matters little what the precise terms are which are used to express it. The essential thing is to catch its spirit. In describing its several phases we shall be viewing the same fundamental attitude from slightly different angles or points of view. This attitude, however, is so vital, it is so essential to all virile thinking and genuine search after truth, that it is absolutely necessary to avoid all ambiguities in its presentation. It is this fact which has determined the method of this chapter.

First of all, this attitude requires the modern thinker frankly to recognize the presence of mystery in life. Multitudes of persons today are perplexed and disturbed simply because they have not arrived at this point of view. They are endeavoring to solve questions which the world's greatest scholars have failed to unravel, and because with their limited equipment and training they cannot understand all mystery, they are overwhelmed and dismayed. We have seen that whether we deal with ourselves or God or evil, our knowledge ends in unsolved questions. It is just so with mathematics or chemistry or physics or astronomy. Every field of knowledge is surrounded by a

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

great unbounded field of the unknown. It is just because that realm exists that the pursuit of truth is so compelling. No one need be discouraged because he has his doubts. No man lives anywhere who can answer all the questions involved even in his own field of special study. Many persons assume that somewhere there is someone who can quell their doubts. It is not so. Doubt is grounded in the unsolved mysteries of life. So long as man thinks he will find questions which he cannot answer. So long as he is growing in his intellectual life he will have before him great perplexing mysteries. Professor Wilhelm Bousset in his little book entitled *The Faith of a Modern Protestant* says: "All questions of knowledge end in a final question which knowledge itself cannot decide. . . . In all our knowledge there remains a final something that is impenetrable." It is well, therefore, willingly to recognize this fact. We must not be disturbed overmuch because our knowledge cannot decide the "final question." We must not be dismayed if we cannot penetrate the "final something." As Professor Bowne says: "Any ultimate fact is mysterious."

If now we endeavor to apply this attitude to the question of religion, we see that it requires of the modern Christian that he recognize clearly the nature of his problem (see Chapter V). He must see the inherent difficulties that confront him and not be disturbed unduly by them. He must recognize the inevitable mys-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

tery of all religion and not be chafed by it. By doing so he will rise to new heights. To acknowledge frankly the baffling mysteries of religious interpretations of life and the world is to banish instantly much of the occasion of one's perplexity. This truth is manifesting itself practically in the fact that our theologians are no longer so intently concerned with the formulation of a thoroughly articulated and logical system of theology. They are searching rather for fundamental principles and for underlying tendencies which reveal the meaning of developing religion. The attitude of the modern Christian is manifested in precisely the same way. He approaches the task of formulating his beliefs with the open and candid acknowledgment that he cannot be so explicit about many doctrines as were his forefathers. For example, he is much more reticent about the future life than was formerly customary. He knows and pretends to know little or nothing about the chronology of the future or the geography of heaven. He frankly and wisely admits the limitations of human knowledge. He sees its mystery and quietly admits it. But in so doing he loses none of his hopes, nor yields any of his sources of inspiration. He simply feels that he has arrived at a more natural, a more sane and a more satisfying conception of his religion.

In the second place this attitude requires the modern thinker fully to recognize that he possesses a good deal of definite and certain knowl-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

edge. If we are to recognize the unknown, it is far more reasonable to recognize the known. If a frank acceptance of mystery is beneficial then a correct emphasis upon one's certainties is essential. Yet how frequently we reverse this process. We center our thought upon what we do not know, we are perplexed by mysteries and dismayed by inscrutable problems while we utterly neglect what we do possess and fail to see its value for the actual needs of life. Perhaps there is some justice in the criticism of our age, that we are more concerned with our doubts than with our certainties. But if that is a genuine concern we have already seen what such a condition signifies for our ultimate knowledge. We may now begin to see the real occasion and necessity of the last chapter. It endeavored not only to recognize but to deepen our consciousness of mystery even as it pertains to our most commonly accepted certainties. It was impossible in the presence of the issues raised there not to feel that mystery, uncertainty and doubt beset all of our best intellectual effort. But now we must emphasize what we endeavored to make clear there, that at the center of every one of those mysteries there was much knowledge and certainty. With all the questions of our origin, constitution and destiny we did not shake the fundamental confidence that we exist. We could struggle with the problems of conscience, freedom and personality, we could go to the very edge of a yawning chasm of inscrutable darkness and mystery

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

without losing for an instant our assurance of certain realities. In our effort to comprehend God in all his fulness we could cry out with the Apostle Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God: How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" but it did not alter in the slightest degree our fundamental belief that God is. We could face all the baffling, complicating ramifications of the problem of evil without losing for one moment our clear consciousness that we are responsible for our evil deeds and that sin exists to be overthrown and conquered. In fact, in no one of the problems did we lack sufficient knowledge for the practical duties and obligations of life. Our stern, rigorous demand to comprehend every possible phase of existence was not satisfied but in no instance were we left stranded and lost in the presence of practical responsibilities or situations of actual living. We could not fully explain whence we had come, but we did know that we were linked to the past and to one another and to God. We do not know *how* our minds act upon our bodies, but if we wish to take a journey we know how to take it. We are not sure about the exact nature of conscience, but whether we acquired it or inherited it, whether we have educated it or neglected it, we have found it always true to the great fundamental distinction between right and wrong. Psychology may be forcing upon us the truth of determinism, our libertarian tendencies may have



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

been somewhat modified, but our freedom still exists as one of the facts of our own self-consciousness. We cannot explain alternating personalities such as Ansel Bourne or Mary Reynolds, but we are not less certain of our own identity. We have no scientific data upon which to ground a coldly intellectual and sternly logical demand for immortality, but our abiding faith and conviction is not disturbed. In fact, we are amply supplied with definite and accurate knowledge, with which to meet our responsibilities and to accept our various relationships and obligations.

Professor Bowne, in discussing the problems of knowledge, used a figure which he in turn borrowed from Kant. This figure represented our intellectual realm as an island of knowledge, with a border of belief and about it all the great ocean of the unknown. The figure is an apt one and emphasizes clearly the relationship of our various intellectual states. We are now trying to insist upon a full appreciation of our island of knowledge. We are all too prone to stand upon this island and lifting up our eyes to behold only the rolling billows and surging waves of the great uncharted and unknown ocean. We are overwhelmed by its immensity, its potentiality and its infinitude. We forget utterly to enjoy the satisfactions and beauties of the shore and almost lose our sense of safety and security even when our feet are standing on the solid rock. Our intellectual attitude calls us to recognize frankly the glories of the



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ocean, but to remember the stability and usefulness of the island. We must never forget that we abide upon the island of certainty.

Here again we find a clear indication of our attitude to our present knowledge. While some are prone to underestimate it, being overwhelmed by the unlimited expanse of the unknown, others make an almost equally serious mistake of overestimating it. They think that their little island is the whole world. They feel quite certain that their knowledge is final and complete. They are given to dogmatism. They speak and act as though their knowledge of all the universe was complete and they speedily condemn all who differ from their views. While some tend to minimize, others are liable to exaggerate, their knowledge. We must never forget the island nor the ocean. The easy thing to do in any situation is to take an extreme position. Seeing the truth in one direction seems to involve the danger of being blind to the truth in the opposite direction. A man's character is often measured by his ability to see the truth upon both sides of a great issue. He must resist the temptation to push to unworthy extremes either side of a controversy. He must avoid the spirit of dogmatism which is sometimes prone to be narrow, bigoted and intolerant in its judgments of the views of others. It simply means that he does not lean over backward but stands erect in his defense of the truth as he sees it. It denotes that he is endeavoring to escape from both the narrow-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ness of conservatism and the "bigotry of liberalism." It becomes obvious that these first two aspects of our intellectual attitude are complements of one another. Recognize mystery and recognize certainty—both are necessary if one is to approach his intellectual tasks with any hope of success. In other words they say, be broad-minded, cultivate a wide outlook, covet a universal spirit. While we are seeking to understand the world we can forget no part of it. We must stand firmly upon the island of certainty gazing at times undisturbed upon the ocean of the unknown.

But, in the third place, we must not forget that between these two worlds there is a border land. Our island is indeed small, the unknown ocean defies the power of our imagination, but between the two lies the fascinating realm which demands attention. Between our knowledge and our ignorance lies the whole great field of belief. The distinction between knowledge and belief is a valid one. Professor Bowne defines knowledge "as that which is self-evident in the nature of reason, or which is immediately given in experience, or which is cogently inferred from the given." It becomes clear at once that very little of what we call knowledge could sustain this test. The same writer says that "the general character of rational belief, in distinction from knowledge, is that it is a conviction based on reasons which lend some support, but do not compel it. These may make it probable but do not prove it."

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

It is in this realm of belief that most of our conclusions must rest. Some things we can demonstrate mathematically and establish beyond all question. There is a great mass of facts which go to make up our knowledge but beyond those facts lie the beliefs and convictions of life which make it what it is. With all our exaltation of the intellect, with all our insistence upon vigorous and clear thinking we must never forget that all our problems cannot be brought under the same intellectual method. As has already been amply shown vast realms of scholarly endeavor end in mystery. Where knowledge is impossible the only sane and natural method is to search for probabilities and convictions. If we cannot attain full knowledge let us at least search for that which commends itself to us as far as we can go. If we cannot fathom the ocean's depths we can explore the coast line. The island of our certainty must be kept as large as possible but this will be achieved most satisfactorily by developing carefully our border of belief. Our intellectual attitude in an age of criticism requires us frankly to admit the presence of mysteries which we cannot solve, fully to recognize the extent and value of our certainties and fearlessly to develop our beliefs in the light of available facts.

But as one seeks to realize such an attitude for his intellectual life he is immediately confronted by the beliefs of the past and the hypotheses of the present. What must be his

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

attitude to these conclusions some of which are called "old" and others "new"? The conflict is a historic one and every generation has faced the problem. It must be acknowledged candidly that no more frequent issue will arise in the actual experience of most individuals than just this one. Whatever may be his point of view, whatever intellectual attitude he may assume, he will constantly be assailed either because he is disregarding the past or because he is living too much in it. The conflict of the "new" and the "old" is omnipresent. The terms are purely relative, for that which is new today may be old tomorrow. That which is sometimes characterized as "old" frequently assumes an air of striking modernity while that which frequently purports to be "new" has merely covered its traditional form with a modern garb.

What then shall be our attitude to the "old"? There must always be a ready willingness to recognize its truth. We may make a fatal mistake by supposing that the past was inevitably in error. Just because new discoveries have discredited many earlier theories and beliefs we must not assume that the present is wiser in all respects than the past. It is not inconceivable to picture a modern Job crying to the present generation, "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Just because we think in different terms from our fathers we must not assume that we are right and they are in error. Every age has its

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

terminologies and expresses its truth in its own way. A worthy intellectual attitude requires one to go back of those terms and endeavor to learn just what they were intended to convey. It is said that Herbert Spencer in approaching a new book or system of thought always asked the cold, rigid, intellectual question, "Is it true?" Does this thought comply with the standards of stern logic and scientific accuracy? To use a term of Matthew Arnold, can it sustain the test of "rigor and vigor"? On the other hand, Maurice, the founder of the Broad Church party in England, in considering any book or proposition raised the query "What does it mean?" Back of its forms and terms, he endeavored to see just what the writer was seeking to express. In our attitude to the past today we need the spirit of Maurice rather than that of Spencer. Without compromising our standards of truth or accuracy, we need to ask not so much is the past true as what does it mean. Undoubtedly "the old" is pregnant with truth. Much of it is concealed beneath forms which deceive us. We must approach the past as we do any element of our problem, eager to find the facts and truths which it presents. This was the clear attitude of Jesus. He "came not to destroy but to fulfil." "In these words," says one scholar, "is comprised all that Jesus was and did and taught; they describe his mission." Jesus was willing to recognize the essential truths of Judaism. In other words he did not disrespect the past nor



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

take purely a negative attitude to it. He came not to destroy. So today the modern scholar must with respect and reverence endeavor to understand that which the past has bequeathed to him.

On the other hand he must equally be ready to recognize its imperfections. No age or institution is perfect. Even if it were perfect it would not remain so in a changing environment. Life involves, necessitates change. Not blind, tenacious clinging to the past, with absolute certainty of its rightness, completeness and finality, but a genuine, fearless desire to correct its errors, eliminate its false ideas and answer its unsolved problems is the worthy and true attitude. Jesus, while reiterating the truth of Judaism, did not fail to disclose its defects. He did not keep the fasts, nor observe the Sabbath according to the Rabbinical law, nor uphold the legislation about ceremonial cleanness and uncleanness, nor refrain from associating repeatedly with publicans and sinners. He came not to destroy but to fulfil. His purpose was not to tear down Judaism but to separate the good from the evil and to give new meaning and content to the prophetic message demanding inner spiritual reality. We must recognize the truth of the past and respect its defenders. Our duty arises out of its imperfections and mistakes. If we are to be true to our generation as our fathers were to theirs, we in turn must accept our responsibilities by endeavoring to correct the errors of the past and cast new



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

light upon its problems. A willing recognition of its truth and a fearless acceptance of its problem can be the only worthy attitude to the past.

Likewise in relation to the newer thought and conclusions the same standards must determine our intellectual attitude. Originally many were hostile to new conceptions solely because they were new. Back of this point of view lies the illogical assumption that anything that has been is true. That which has been and has persisted and has commended itself to experience is undoubtedly true. There is unquestionably a large element of truth in the pragmatic test which insists that that is true which "works." But frequently things "work" for a time without being true. Just because some theory is old or new it can be neither accepted nor discredited. Truth knows no time distinctions. Consequently either to be hostile to a truth simply because it is new or to accept it because it is novel is indefensible. The primary question is not whether it is old or new, but whether it is true or false. Jesus did not hesitate to enunciate new truths. His unique position in human thought is often tested by the newness and originality of his conceptions. He struggled to replace externality with inwardness and national hopes with universal aspirations. Perhaps his attitude both to the past and the future is summed up in these words of Professor Votaw: "He did not repudiate the past, He did not even break with the best which the past

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

had produced; He only developed and perfected the high ideal of life which had found embodiment in the Hebrew Bible." He did not destroy the past but came to fulfil its best ideals and hopes.

But beneath these features of this question concerning our attitude to the "old" and the "new" lies our conception of the nature of truth. If it is a fixed, dead, static entity then the "old" is our delight and the "new" an offence. If the faith was once for all delivered unto the saints then our discussion is useless. We are simply carrying coals to Newcastle. But if truth is a living, virile, expanding thing, then our subject is of vital significance. We must remember that truth is just this. It is inseparably related to life, and grounded in experience. We must understand that it is precisely because men in former generations have experienced truth that the past becomes for us a source of truth. We must realize, likewise, that there is no truth unless it is the truth *for us*. By its very nature truth is a living, growing reality. Truth cannot be static. Applied to religion, this means that the modern Christian knows that Christianity is not a dead, stagnant pool, but a flowing, expanding river. He understands that Christianity has always adjusted itself to new conditions and environments. This is the message of Monasticism, the Crusades, the Reformation and the modern social movement. It is the message that Christianity is a life. It is the truth that the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Kingdom of God is growing like the mustard seed or expanding like the leaven. It tells him that his religion is based not upon a book but upon a personality. It assures him that his belief is universal and eternal because alive.

When the modern Christian assumes this intellectual point of view he is not disturbed by the announcement of changes in the statement of truth or of his creed. He sees, in fact, that this is an evidence of the vitality of his religion. He is not dependent upon dead formulæ, but demands living truths. His attitude enables him to witness many transformations, adjustments and restatements and still feel no serious disturbance. He knows that his religion is life and that life is not fixity but change. Eliminate it, and stagnation and death follow. All life, all progress require change. It involves the sloughing off of the useless accretions of the past, and the development of new forms. There is no rigid line of distinction between the old and the new. "The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The whole universe is one gigantic, developing, changing process. It is God's method of creation. The new must therefore come out of the old, and the old must be transformed into the new. It becomes plain that our underlying attitude should be neither to accept or reject anything because it is new or old but to realize the essential nature of truth and to remember that

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

as a growing, living reality it involves constant change and adjustment.

In establishing our intellectual attitude in an age of criticism, therefore, we are not to consult either past or present theories as such, but we are to remember that truth is the object of our search and consequently that reason is our guide and servant. Our object just at this juncture is to establish the contention that reason is to be used everywhere, in religion as in other fields, to arrive at tenable and satisfying conclusions. In matters of religion it has sometimes been urged that there is a conflict between reason and revelation, that whatever appears in the Bible, whether it appeals to reason or not is the final and unquestioned authority. It has been asserted that to trust one's reason is to oppose God, that to have confidence in one's own judgments, is to be guilty of rebellious and haughty self-exaltation. This assumption rests upon a false notion of both terms of the problem. Reason is a divine gift. It is the instrument by which God is known, His truth apprehended and His universe understood. Revelation is simply God becoming known. But the vital consideration is that man must acquire this knowledge. In one sense God gives all knowledge, but in another sense knowledge is our own product or creation. It becomes knowledge for me only as I know it, as my mind actively appropriates it. You cannot make a revelation to a stone

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

or a tree or a house. The receptivity of the one who learns is just as essential as the objective existence of the truth. Knowledge cannot, of course, exist apart from the one who knows it. Likewise and on the other hand the object of knowledge, "an abiding order, independent of our finite and individual thinking is the necessary presupposition and implication of our thinking." In other words, God and truth exist whether the individual knows it or not. The true relation of reason and revelation, therefore, becomes apparent. If God's revelation is anything it must be rational. Revelation reveals or it is not revelation. Consequently, if reason is the means by which we learn, and if revelation offers to us what we are to learn, it simply becomes absurd to suppose even the possibility of conflict between them. They are both parts of the same universe. To posit any inner conflict between the two is to presuppose a chaotic world. They are but the two indispensable factors of the same process. We cannot go further at this point for we are beginning to catch foreshadowings of the problem which emerges in any effort to establish an intellectual attitude or point of view. It is the fundamental question of authority—the question whether within a man or without him is the standard by which his truth is to be judged. To that problem the next chapter will be devoted. If the reader finds that question emerging let him place it in the background of his mind for the present while

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

we undertake to complete the formulation of our intellectual attitude.

In conclusion we can weld into one statement all of the various phases which we have been describing by saying that the only worthy intellectual attitude in this age of criticism is *a frank, open-minded, candid search for the truth*. The overmastering passion of any honest, clear thinker is the love of truth. He faces fearlessly, courageously and undisturbed the mysteries of life. He knows how to estimate and appreciate the value of his knowledge. Where knowledge fails, he clings to his beliefs and convictions. His deepest purpose is neither to defend nor to forget the past, neither to accept nor to reject the present. For him, time distinctions do not affect truth. Recognizing the unreality of many religious terms and phrases, he claims the right to use his reason—God's gift to man. He sees no possibility of conflict between God's truth and his mind. He recognizes that they are made after the same pattern, that a striking parallel exists between his mind and the knowable qualities of the external world. His one desire is to banish falsehood and error and to search for light and truth. He is not afraid of the truth. With Christ, he can say: "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." He seeks her as the one unqualified blessing of his life. He is a servant of the truth. Consequently he accepts the scientific spirit of



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

our age as one of his greatest assets. His desire is neither to discredit nor to establish former creeds but solely and primarily to find what is true. He believes that this end is best attained by the methods which critical scholarship is employing. He considers that its great major contentions are true. He finds satisfaction in current interpretations of the world and man. Above all he accepts, without equivocation, the aims and purposes of modern research. He does this because he loves the truth. He understands how the philosopher Fichte could exclaim: "I am called to bear witness to the truth; my life and my fortune amount to nothing, the effects of my life amount to infinitely much. I am a priest of the truth; I am in her service; I have bound myself to do and to dare and to suffer everything for her." His one clear purpose in the realm of intellectual pursuits is to escape from ignorance, prejudice, inaccuracy and falsity and to find his way in a world of growing, expanding truth and reality. He yearns to know the peace of Horace Bushnell who could say near the close of a long and useful life in which he had proven an intellectual leader of his day; "I have but one satisfaction, I have loved the truth and sought to know it." This, then, is our intellectual attitude. It is a candid, open-minded, tireless search for the truth.

A word of caution here will not be amiss. Because we have been dealing strictly with an intellectual problem, it may appear to some that

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

reason has been exalted unduly, and that the whole great realm of faith has been disregarded. May we ask the reader, therefore, to recall again the rather fixed limitations of our field of thought. There has been no desire to make life a purely intellectual affair nor to convert it into a thing of logic solely. If the author has accomplished his purpose he has made somewhat clearer the place of belief, faith and conviction. After all our life is not lived in a vacuum. It is an intensely practical affair. If we have succeeded in establishing a worthy intellectual attitude, then the realm of faith gains in its mastery over our souls. Beyond all our intellectual acquisitions lies the beautiful hope of clear spiritual vision sometime and somewhere. "Whether there be knowledge it shall be done away. For we know in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see in a mirror, darkly (in a riddle), but then face to face." Beyond all our doubts and misgivings, beneath our intellectual perplexities and mental strivings lies the whole realm of sacred faith and holy confidence. Through experience we learn sooner or later the trysting place of "deepest doubt and highest faith."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FREEDOM OF THE TRUTH

THE reader might naturally think that our task is now finished. We set out to formulate a worthy intellectual attitude in an age of criticism. After a consideration of the salient features of our thought world and a study of the problems of doubt we endeavored to state an acceptable intellectual point of view. That attitude was nothing other than an endless, fearless, determined search for the truth regardless of its consequences to ourselves or our beliefs. It was essentially the ideal of Lessing, who could write: "If God were to offer me in one hand immutable truth and in the other the search for truth, I should say in all humility, 'Lord, keep the absolute truth; it is not suited to me. Leave to me only the power and the desire to seek for it, though I never find it wholly and definitely.'" But beneath such an attitude there lies a very important question of method. It is the question which has divided thinkers into two distinct schools and the Christian Church into two separate organizations. It is the subject of authority.

In our last chapter in dealing with the right

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

use of reason we were forced suddenly to recognize that we could not go further on account of this problem. The moment we try to establish the position that there can be no possible conflict between reason and revelation, we are face to face with an issue which must be considered by itself. To insist upon a frank, candid, open-minded search for the truth, to say that the overmastering passion of the scholar is his love of reality, to demand that we shall be satisfied with nothing but that which complies with the stern requirements of the mind, to assume that the only standard which we can recognize is reason, is to confront some of the deepest convictions of the past and to arrive at the point where we must go back of this attitude to the whole question of our intellectual method. What shall be our standards of truth? By what means are we to separate the false from the true? With our great absorbing desire to find the truth, how are we going to know the truth when we find it? It is very easy to toss about glittering generalities, to exalt abstract ideas such as truth, but just precisely what do we mean when we say we are not going to be satisfied with anything but the truth? We do not now propose to ask Pilate's question "What is truth?" but to raise this absolutely basal issue: By what method are we to establish our truth?

Shall we trust to the methods of the past when reason was held in tutelage and all questions were decided by authority? Many cen-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

turies were dominated by this ideal. A reference to Aristotle, a quotation of a Bible verse (the proof text method), a citation from the writings of some church scholar, the edict of a Pope, the conclusion of some ecumenical council, was all that was necessary to establish the truth in any field of knowledge. Here was something definite, final, satisfying and authoritative. It relieved the great mass of mankind of the necessity of thinking for themselves. If a Greek philosopher could be quoted, the issue was settled. If a verse of Scripture, regardless of its actual context or original meaning or true interpretation, even as mere words, seemed to apply to the subject under discussion, no further argument was necessary. If nothing in the past established the conclusion, then at rare intervals a great council was called, representatives of all sections of the church were invited, prolonged debates were engaged in, the most skilful methods of manipulating the members were often resorted to and finally a decision was reached. This pronouncement was authoritative and for the rank and file of people settled the question permanently. All of this represents the method of external authority. It dethrones reason and robs the individual of his right to think. To be sure, much of our knowledge we must accept upon the authority of others. Otherwise every individual would begin anew in the quest for truth. By the very nature of the process, no person can establish every truth for himself. He must ac-

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

cept from the past, from experts, specialists and investigators conclusions which he cannot verify. But these conclusions are to be used, not because a certain person promulgates them, nor because they come from a previous age, but because they have commended themselves to the reason and experience of the race. The method of external authority says accept this, not necessarily because it is true, but because I say to accept it. These statements are final not because they may or may not appeal to your reason, but because of their source and origin. This is the method which grounds authority outside of the individual. Truth is that which has been established by some other person or agency than yourself. It is precisely the spirit of the unwise parent who demands obedience solely because of his parental authority rather than because his command is just and right and true. It may be all these and it may not be. In any case, obedience is the only response which is accepted. Both in the training of children and in the acquisition of knowledge there are crises when conclusions must be accepted upon sheer authority. The ideal, however, in both cases is probably grounded more deeply and firmly in something which recognizes the personality of the child and the mind of the learner.

On the other hand there is the method of inner authority. It rejects all external mechanical standards and insists that the only truth is that which the individual can accept because



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

it commends itself to his reason and judgment. It is obvious at once that this method is liable to fall into just as great mistakes and errors as the former method. In an extreme form, it leads to the most erratic and dangerous conclusions. If one is to insist that the truth is dependent solely upon his own interpretation and appropriation of it, then the way is open to the most absurd ideas, inconsistent theories and individual aberrations. Obviously, however, we are face to face with a fundamental problem. We love the truth, we propose to find it at any cost and it is the goal, though unattainable, of our intellectual struggles. But we must make sure that we have the truth when we accept it. Shall others decide it for us, or is that utterly inconsistent with our intellectual attitude of demanding the truth? Must we find it ourselves, within ourselves, or does that again rob us of the truth? Shall it be authority or autonomy? Shall we be subjects or kings, receptive or independent?

In formulating the problem involved, we have intimated somewhat the traditional answer which has been made to the question of authority. It will add clearness and definiteness to our treatment, however, if now we consider briefly the most significant and powerful historic forms which that answer has assumed. In the field of religion, the Roman Catholic Church serves as the most consistent and logical expression of external authority. For centuries loyal followers of Christ have found in

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

the Church the authoritative expressions of his commands. The utterance of the priest, as the representative of the Church, is the very word of God. It is ultimate, final and beyond all question or contradiction. The teachings, the doctrines and the rules of the Church are instruments of God and must be obeyed. The doctrine of the infallibility of the Church is universally accepted by Roman Catholics. Until 1870 there was considerable disagreement as to where the ultimate authority rested, whether in the Council General, the Pope or in the two working together harmoniously. But on July 18, 1870 the world witnessed the final culmination of the development of this doctrine of infallibility and authority. This was the formula then actually adopted: "Conformably to the tradition faithfully followed since the beginning of the Christian faith, with the approbation of the Holy Council, we teach and define this as *divinely revealed dogma*: "The Roman Pontiff, when speaking *ex cathedra*—that is, when performing the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians he defines, in virtue of his superior apostolic authority, a point of doctrine touching faith and morals, obligatory for the entire church—the Roman Pontiff, thanks to the divine assistance which was promised to him in the person of the most blessed Peter, enjoys that infallible authority with which the divine Redeemer endowed his Church, when the question arises of defining doctrine concerning faith and morals. The definitions of the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Roman Pontiff are then unchangeable in themselves, and are not rendered such by the consent of the Church." Here we observe a most striking and significant decision. It required some sixteen centuries to complete this process, but we have now reached its ultimate and final form. The infallibility of the Pope, as enunciated in 1870 by the Vatican Council is the most logical and unqualified form of the doctrine of external authority.

The Protestant Reformation, while beginning with a clear recognition of the authority of the Christian consciousness, soon manifested the same tendency as Roman Catholicism. In place of the Church it set up the Holy Scriptures as a final authority. While it made every man a priest and exalted the faith of the individual, it substituted the Bible for the Church as an external standard. We have already observed (Chapter V) the contrast between the traditional and the modern attitude to the Bible. It is only necessary, therefore, at this juncture, to allude to the interpretation which Protestantism placed upon the Scriptures. They became the fetish of the Christian. The Bible was true because it was the inspired revelation from God. Its contents were not to be treated as other documents because being in the holy canon they were *ipso facto* true. They were true because they were in the Bible, not in the Bible because they were true. The Bible was the *sine qua non* of Christian truth.

Now the specific issue which we confront in

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

this chapter is this: Can we in our search for truth accept an external standard? Are these historic forms consistent with the intellectual attitude which we have endeavored to formulate? At this juncture it becomes necessary to concede that clear and honest thinkers disagree radically upon this problem and that consistency with our attitude requires only that we open and not that we settle the question. It is a complicated, intricate subject and centuries of life point to the validity and usefulness of an external authority. But it must be stated frankly and fearlessly that external authority pure and simple and a candid, frank, open search for the truth are neither congenial nor consistent. If one is to be logical, he must accept one or the other. He cannot receive entirely upon authority his knowledge and at the same time pretend to think for himself. It is far more comfortable from one point of view, to have one's opinions delivered to him ready made. It is far less troublesome to be assured definitely of what one should believe. Doubtless many temperaments demand just such an authority. But as was intimated in the introductory chapter, this book is intended for the person who *thinks*, who is intellectually alert, who instinctively questions everything, who finds himself in serious doubt, and yearns for the way out, for truth and for certainty, self-evidencing and convincing.

Now such a person recognizes quickly very serious difficulties in a purely external standard

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

such as is presented to him either by an authoritative Church or an infallible book. He knows, through actual experience, that men are fallible, that they err both in knowledge and judgment at times. He sees through a study of actual history that the Church has been in serious error, that her intellectual conclusions have often proven false, and particularly in the light of modern science that so far as he is concerned theology must be reformulated or abandoned entirely. Above all these considerations stand his own reason and conscience demanding recognition and satisfaction. He cannot accept a dogma solely because it is asserted to be divine. He cannot perform duties simply because they are enjoined upon him. He is willing to recognize the authority of any organization or person or book but the authority in each case can be only the authority of truth which is expressed. In connection with the Bible the same difficulties arise augmented by all of the problems made obvious by higher criticism. When we consider the questions of language, text, origin, content and authorship of each book of the Bible, we are conscious that we must have some other more satisfactory theories than those of verbal inspiration, strict inerrancy, and rigid infallibility. Here again the voice of reason and conscience insists upon a hearing. Some of the ethical standards of the Old Testament cannot be reconciled either with the enlightened conscience of today or with the teachings of Jesus. Polygamy, slavery,



## *The Freedom of the Truth*

murder, cruelty to the vanquished, imprecatory prayers upon one's enemies,—these and many other elements do not appear as ideal. Moreover when one considers the historical development of the Bible, and particularly the methods employed in determining which books should be included and which should be excluded then he finds it difficult to accept the traditional view of inspiration. The canon was developed through long periods and has had the most uncertain limits. Just why some books were regarded as worthy of a place in the canon and others were excluded it is difficult to understand. Would our Bible be less valuable to the spiritual life if the Book of Esther were replaced by the Book of Wisdom? "So long as inspiration cannot be claimed for the process by which canonicity was determined, canonicity cannot be held to fix the bonds of inspiration." It is extremely difficult to avoid the inference that we are endeavoring to underestimate the Bible, but we trust that by arriving at a reasonable conclusion it may become plain that we aim to exalt its real worth and deep spiritual value. The point is that we find insuperable difficulties in accepting our knowledge and beliefs solely upon external authority. We use the Church and the Bible as illustrations and point out the difficulties connected with outer authority in terms of those problems because they are the very forms which have exerted the widest influence and create the most serious questions of a practical nature for the indi-



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

vidual. The principle holds true in any field of knowledge. For the man who thinks, who is struggling intently for the truth, who finds that he has a mind cogent and persistent, and who is endowed with a reason which must be recognized, it seems to be perfectly clear and obvious that he cannot recognize as final and authoritative any authority or standard outside of himself. We sympathize with Vinet when he said "that which I absolutely repudiate is authority."

What have we done thus far in this chapter? We have endeavored to show that our intellectual attitude compels the consideration of the question of authority, we have attempted to open the problem clearly by describing both the methods of external and internal authority, we have sought to illustrate the former method by the doctrines of an infallible Church and Bible, we have undertaken to set forth the insuperable difficulties involved in such a standard and have concluded that since it is inconsistent with our intellectual attitude it must be discarded. Whither shall we go? We seem to have cut ourselves off from the past and to have separated ourselves from the present. Unwilling to accept the decisions of others, rejecting the authority of any organization or person or book that grounds itself in something other than the reason of him who accepts it, have we not set ourselves up as puppet gods, claiming the wisdom and ability to determine the truth for ourselves? In our eagerness to escape

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

from authority, have we not rushed into extreme subjectivism where the whims and caprices of each individual must constitute our standards and where truth will be what each man makes it? If we reject outer authority, must we not set up inner standards? If they are not external must they not be internal? Just because this is not our alternative, but because there is a standard which recognizes the demands of both an outer and an inner world we have entitled this chapter not "Authority or Autonomy" but rather "The Freedom of the Truth." Unquestionably it is in an explanation which those words offer that we can find a most adequate, satisfying and positive answer to the question of authority. We hope that in our effort to present this explanation it may become plain that neither in an external or internal authority alone, nor in the rejection of either or both will we find an adequate method for determining truth but in some standard which at one and the same time takes full recognition of both aspects of the problem by satisfying the demands of a cogent reason and by remembering the inevitable fact that we are always dealing with an objective, independent order of truth.

### NEGATIVE FREEDOM.

What then is this standard? What do we mean by the freedom of the truth? Clearly it seems to demand "freedom" in some form. Freedom is the word which recognizes and ex-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

presses the feelings and needs of the person who rejects an external authority. It is indeed the word around which the deepest hopes and aspirations of the human race have centered. But in the particular connection in which we are using it here what does it signify? In arriving at our conception of freedom we may begin with the observation that we mean an absence of limitations or a lack of interference. For the sake of clearness, let us call this "negative freedom" as Professor George Herbert Palmer suggests. If now we relate this conception to life in general we can come back to the intellectual realm and see its clear application. Undoubtedly by freedom we must often mean freedom from the great bondages of the race, from the things of which we would be rid. For example, mankind desires to be free from the barriers of a material environment. As a consequence, men have struggled toward an increasing mastery of the forces of nature. The marvelous liberties which have been won through intense efforts to overcome the hindrances of our physical life are nothing short of astounding. In the realm of politics and government we see the same conception at work. Nations have striven above all else to be free from foreign domination. To be compelled to pay allegiance to an alien power has been intolerable. In the economic and social world similar influences have been operative. Slavery was not only bondage to the individual, it was an offence and hindrance to the people

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

as a whole, and consequently it was eliminated. The evils of caste and class distinction, inequalities in the distribution of wealth, these and kindred conditions which produce a real if not a nominal slavery are contradictory to man's innate love of liberty and are the object of irresistible opposition. They must be thrown off. Now in the intellectual world the same process has been at work and the same resistless demand has been manifested. Man has yearned to break the chains of fear and ignorance and to shake off the shackles of prejudice and superstition. He has sought release from the fetters of a narrow conservatism and has endeavored to eliminate all of the forces which would prevent a free and untrammelled use of reason. Any form of external authority has become increasingly repugnant to him. The only sort of authority which he can accept is one which gives him freedom from everything which would limit the use of reason, and hinder his search for truth. As in these other realms it has meant great advancement for mankind, so here it signifies a new mastery of intellectual things. Clearly one aspect of our conception of freedom is this negative idea which emphasizes the thought that freedom is the absence of certain things, that it is freedom *from* the bondage of external authority.

### POSITIVE FREEDOM.

But we cannot stop with this negative conception. The slave yearns to escape from his

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

bondage. It is the great wall which stands between him and life. While he is a slave his whole thought focuses upon the destruction of that wall. But when it is once destroyed, what then? As a people we have learned the solemn and awful lesson that while the Emancipation Proclamation destroyed slavery, it did not produce genuine freedom. While in bondage our whole thought may be concentrated upon our escape, but back of that thought there must lie something positive. In our quest, therefore, for our definition of freedom we cannot pause with a purely negative idea, but must search for the positive content that lies beyond the desire to be released from certain limitations. We must not only be free from bondage, but free to do and to be something. This we may call positive freedom. If we can escape from the slavery of external authority, what then do we propose for ourselves? We must make sure that our intellectual bondage will be turned into actual freedom, that we are not merely escaping into the form and not the reality of mental independence.

Here again, life as a whole may help us. Positive freedom should in some way offer opportunity to a man to be and to become what in his best and highest moments he desires. To every person there come those rich experiences in which he catches faint glimpses of what he should like to be. In moments of aspiration he beholds a vision of what he might become. In some way we want a freedom

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

which makes it possible for us to struggle upward and onward toward that vision. Professor Cremer expresses this idea when he says that freedom "restores the man to himself, makes him his own master, independent of every power alien to his higher nature, and guarantees for him unhindered possession and unfettered action of his life in a manner conformable to his real self." This is the kind of freedom for which any true man yearns. Back of our desire to cast off our bondage is the real inner purpose to find the path that leads to self-expression and self-mastery. We find we must not only be free *from*, but free *to*, that we must have not so much a negative as a positive freedom.

Now what is true of life in general is preeminently true of the intellectual realm. As we have described positive freedom in its universal application, it was not difficult to see its definite relation to our present problem. The love of truth is insatiable. Every thinking man dreams of the mastery of new fields and the acquisition of new truths. He is lured on to new insights, new interpretations and new understandings of life, the world and duty. He dreams of what his intellectual world might be. His supreme desire is not to be rid of external authority or the necessity of accepting ready made conceptions, but to find the largest possibilities of his mind, and to enjoy the full and free use of his reason and thus to actualize its potentialities. He wants for his mind just



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

what Professor Cremer says freedom does for life. He wants reason restored to its rightful prerogatives, he desires that it should be its own master and independent of every limitation alien to its best and rightful use. He yearns intensely that his mind should be untrammelled and unfettered in its effort to manifest its divine life. He demands a mind which can think clearly, accurately and sequaciously upon the ultimate facts of any problem. In other words, our new standard says we must be *free to think*. We must not only be free from ignorance and prejudice on the one hand, or external authority and theories of infallibility on the other, but we must be free to grapple fearlessly with every new issue, to face fairly every problem, to think conscientiously and honestly about the duties and obligations of life. We may arrive at precisely the same conclusions as our fathers, but we must be allowed to take the journey for ourselves, independently and unattended. John Milton, as a result of his own bitter experience gave eloquent expression to this truth. After the Restoration he was deprived of his office and persecuted by Charles II. Later, when the king invited him to resume his secretaryship, he refused with these ringing words: "Give me the liberty to know, to think, to believe and to utter freely, according to conscience, above all other liberties." This is the sort of freedom which men yearn for when they reject external authorities. It is not opposition to such

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

standards *per se*, but rather because they rob them of real life in the intellectual realm. They may appear to be obsessed with the idea of freedom from external hindrances and limitations, while in reality they are craving for the freedom which reason inevitably demands. They insist upon living intellectually.

### REAL FREEDOM.

These statements may recognize sufficiently one side of our question. They seem to give us some conception of what freedom is but as yet we have not related it to the external realm of truth. Just what do we mean when we use the term "the freedom of *the truth*?" Although all that has been said about freedom seems entirely acceptable still we do not feel that the real heart of the problem has been reached. We want this sort of positive intellectual liberty and yet something 'is curiously lacking. There seem to be elements of the subject which we have not fully recognized. By freedom we do seem to mean escape from the limitations and bondages of external authorities and then opportunity for untrammelled intellectual effort and self-expression. Unquestionably our mental freedom must bring us these very things, but still the situation is not fully clarified. We seem to fear that certain stern elements of truth have been overlooked or disregarded. We must acknowledge that we have been viewing our subject chiefly from the standpoint of our own individual interests, and

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

have been primarily concerned about our own mental privileges. But there are two factors in this process. Knowledge is not the result only of the activities of our minds. It becomes necessary for us to ground our position more firmly and to incorporate in our standard not only what we want freedom to be, but what it *must* be under the conditions imposed upon all knowledge.

Now what is the real secret of the question of freedom? What is the heart of the problem? Here again, if we follow the method already adopted, we shall gain much for our present undertaking. That is, if we consider freedom from the standpoint of life as a whole rather than from the point of view of our intellectual interests alone, we shall be amply rewarded. Stated simply, is this not the secret of our whole discussion? Life has two sides. We call them the inner and the outer, or the internal and the external, or the subjective and the objective. Within, are certain irrepressible, unquenchable desires, hopes and aspirations. Without us are the stern unalterable facts of the world. Between these two elements of life there is an eternal, inevitable interdependence and relationship. Man finds his life in the effort to relate properly these two aspects of existence. Frequently, they are in conflict and man struggles to conquer, to subdue and properly to utilize that which constitutes his outer world for the benefit of his inner life.

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

Now does our real freedom, as distinguished from either its negative or positive form, involve the complete annihilation of these external elements and barriers? We have defined freedom as freedom from limitations. By this did we mean to imply escape from all the forces of an outer world? For example, the child at times strongly resents parental authority. He feels the bondage of obedience. What a paradise of freedom it would be, if for one whole day he could do just as he pleased. Hands must be clean, clothes must be neat, playthings must be put away, little duties must be met regularly and punctually. What slavery to external authority! What a release it would be to escape into a world where parental authority was unknown. But suppose we remove the parents. Is the child free? Or let the parents lack in firmness and the power to claim obedience through the appeal to justice, fairness, truth and honesty, and does the child attain richer life? Has he larger freedom or greater bondage? At once all the hard conditions of a cold world confront him and his last state is worse than his first. He has given up seeming bondage for the mere shadow of freedom. However much the child may imagine that parents mean bondage, it would not bring him freedom if he could be wholly rid of them. His real freedom must consist in some truer relationship to his parents.

The point in question becomes even more obvious when it is applied to the mature man.

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Imagine a person who objects to the limitations of his freedom which social responsibilities impose upon him. Why should he be his brother's keeper? What concern is it of his, if tenement houses are unsanitary, and if cities have no play grounds? Why does he have to be burdened with the thought of his neighbor's welfare? Would he escape from bondage into real freedom by full and complete isolation? Remove his neighbor. Eliminate social relationships and responsibilities. At least let him live as though such obligations did not exist. Has real life been found? What can be worse bondage than isolated, self-centered existence? Surely, real freedom does not consist in the obliteration of all human ties but rather in some more genuine interpretation of their meaning and place in life.

Still regarding life as a whole and not thinking merely of its intellectual phase, is it not apparent that we must search for a truer conception of freedom than a negative one? We sense perfectly that from certain things we must escape but that real freedom does not in any sense involve the complete removal of all the limitations of life. Just so in the intellectual realm, the search for truth does not demand a purely subjective inner authority which completely disregards the objective order of thought. We are now prepared to observe that, although it does involve constant activity or struggle, life is only life because of its relationships and because it is dual or two-fold. Every

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

person is related to himself, to nature, to the state and to his God. To destroy or to disregard these ties is death. Life is social. Every person finds himself in an environment. Not in the effort to annihilate those surroundings, but in the purpose properly to understand and control them will he find his real life and freedom.

Moreover, a significant fact is that we live in a world which is law-abiding. We can trust it. The orderly character of our universe makes it one upon which we can depend. The farmer sows his wheat and is perfectly confident that he will not have a crop of corn. The architect plans his buildings relying absolutely upon the certainty of the force of gravitation and trusting confidently in the permanent qualities of the building materials used. The grandeur and dignity of life are found in the great elements of stability, uniformity and permanence which characterize the world in which we find ourselves. We may have confidence in it and may depend upon it without the slightest hesitancy or qualification.

We have now reached the very heart of our problem. We have seen that life is the constant effort or struggle to relate our inner desires to our outer world. We have seen, however, that real freedom is not to be found in any effort at complete annihilation of all external forces. But, above all, we have observed that our lives are environed by a world orderly and law-abiding. Now wherein do we find our



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

real freedom? Shall we chafe under the limitations of the law of gravitation and insist upon erecting buildings whose greatest size and weight are at the top? Shall we refuse to recognize the perfectly well known laws of nature when we desire to cross a river and instead of going to a bridge plunge into the water at the most convenient point? Suppose we plan to raise a crop of oats. Shall we assert our liberty by sowing any seed which may be closest at hand? The point which we are trying to establish becomes so obvious that it is almost absurd to state it. We observe that our real freedom will arise, not out of a total disregard of the demands of our world, but out of a most careful and painstaking effort to understand its laws and to know its truth. The greatest freedom of the child is in a willing obedience to true and worthy parents. The truest freedom of the individual is in the fullest possible adjustment to the facts of his outer world. "Obedience to law is liberty." We must know our world, understand its laws, fathom its relationships and thereby gain our real freedom.

Freedom is not a purely subjective thing which says: "I must be free from the limitations of life." Freedom emerges when a man, understanding his world, recognizing its laws, knowing its truth, so relates himself to it that it becomes his instrument and servant. The supposed conflict between external and internal authority vanishes when we see that real free-

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

dom is the freedom of the truth, utter compliance with the facts of our outer world. Internal authority only becomes external when it ceases to be internal. That is, our certainty of truth is dependent upon external authorities only when we fail, by our powers of mind, to make it our own. The child who obeys the parent is not conscious of external authority. It becomes such only when he disobeys. The citizen does not feel the bondage of the law so long as he is law-abiding. It is only when he commits murder that he becomes conscious of the terrible external authority of the law against murder. It is only when he is lawless that the external authority of the state arises. Just so with our whole world. To the one who knows its truth, who obeys its dictates, who keeps its laws, it imposes few external limitations. Only when we disregard its law, remain in ignorance of its secrets and ignore its truth does it inflict upon us its penalties and create for us its bondage. If you know the truth of your world, that truth will make you free. Herein we transcend completely the old antinomy of internal and external authority. To make it purely internal is to disregard the whole outer world, to make it purely external is to rob one of real life. Our rejection of an outer standard was justified, our fear of a purely inner authority was valid.

Now we have stated the truth of our problem for life as a whole. It seems almost unnecessary to turn and apply it specifically to the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

realm of the mind. This method has been used deliberately because it was believed that the argument as applied to freedom for life in its entirety would relate itself more intimately and directly to the actual experience of the individual reader. Once having seen the application of our standard to life in its totality, it becomes clear and obvious that it applies to the intellectual world. Here, too, life has its two sides. There is the active mind and the external world, the searcher after reality and the objective independent order of truth. Intellectual life consists in the relationship of these two factors. It is satisfying, as the mind can comprehend and understand that world. It is fascinating, as reason reaches out further and further for new truth. The most significant feature of the intellectual problem is the strange parallel which exists between man's finite mind and the knowable qualities of an outer universe. Knowledge arises out of that marvelous relationship. Both the knowing mind and the known world seem fashioned after the same pattern. This fact signifies much for one who is searching for an explanation of the universe. Our love of truth within, the order of truth without, these are the two indispensable correlates in all knowledge. Our intellectual life is the effort to relate these two worlds.

How obvious it becomes, therefore, that we cannot insist upon mere subjectivity, upon pure internal authority alone and endeavor to anni-

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

hilate all external standards and relationships. To attempt such a feat would be nothing short of intellectual suicide. Just as the child dreams of the bliss of a world where parental authority is absent, so too we are sometimes tempted to yearn for utter and complete intellectual independence. But let us once lose touch with the outer realm of truth and knowledge ceases. We are at once confronted with all the aberrations and idiosyncracies of the individual mind. The glory of certainty, grounded in the world of truth, has been sacrificed upon the altar of subjectivism. Just as the man loses his life by disregarding his social responsibilities, so too the mind destroys its prerogatives by asserting its entire independence of an external standard. In other words the mind finds its life only in a complete giving of itself to the outer world of truth. It finds its life by losing it in the realm of reality.

Again, since our world is law-abiding and orderly, it will present the same truth to all minds. The universe is rational, capable of being comprehended by the human intellect. We can have perfect confidence that our standard of truth is established for us in the permanence and stability of our world. If it were a place of miracle and chance, if constantly it were interfered with by some power operating *ab extra*, if it said one thing today and another tomorrow, then our problem of knowledge would be hopelessly complicated. We do have an external standard. There is reason to be-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

lieve that outside of us there exists that which determines our knowledge and gives uniformity to our ideas. Do we not see clearly, therefore, just what our answer to the complicated question of authority must be? It is *the freedom of the truth*. The freedom of the mind, asserting its real life by endeavoring to know the truth of the world. Is it internal? Yes. Is it external? Yes. Is it entirely one or the other? No. It is internal in the sense that the individual mind, free from *ipse dixit* authority, and free to think, untrammelled by any power alien to its essential life, is actively appropriating and assimilating truth. It is external in that the mind is dealing with a great law-abiding, fixed, independent order of reality. Any effort to exalt one part of the process to the exclusion of the other means a flagrant departure from our intellectual attitude. Again it must be said that internal authority becomes external only when it ceases to be internal. The person who is struggling to know his universe, who is absorbed by the search for truth, is not disturbed by the limitations of an external world. In fact, it is the ground and source of his intellectual life. It is the arena in which he enjoys his freedom. Let him once disregard its abiding verities and instantly he is conscious of its rigid and infallible authority. If you know the truth of your world, that truth will give you your intellectual freedom. The freedom of the truth, complete absence of mechanical, infallible, man-made,



## *The Freedom of the Truth*

external authority, the possession of vital, growing, divine, inner thought and an unqualified absorption in the abiding eternal verities of God's world, this is the answer to our question of authority.

In conclusion, it may be observed that such a position is philosophically sound. It embodies the essential truths emphasized by a century of discussion of the problems involved in our theories of knowledge. It recognizes that all knowledge depends upon an active mind appropriating an outer world. While this problem inevitably leads into a jungle of psychological and epistemological intricacies and entanglements, there are certain fundamental truths which can be recognized as commanding wide assent. It is these conclusions which we have endeavored to embody in this chapter. It becomes obvious that this standard does not call upon the individual mind to create its truth, for it assumes the objective existence of reality. It is not mysticism, "that which refusing to admit that we can gain truth with absolute certainty either from sense or reason, points us to faith, feeling or inspiration, as its only valid source," for it demands a rigid use of reason and presupposes an absorbing search for truth. It is not quietism, the doctrine which requires "self-abnegation and withdrawing the soul from outward activities, fixing it in passive religious contemplation." In place of mystic meditation or introspection it requires direct, vigorous, active contact with



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

one's environment. In fact, the freedom of the truth is the standard which applies not so much to our reason *qua* reason as it does to our total self, to our whole inner being which, when reason alone cannot be satisfied, still tells us that this is the truth. "Which is to say," in the words of Auguste Sabatier, "that there is in man a sense which perceives the truth, and a norm by which to recognize and test it." After all is said and done, this is the test to which we bring all truth. It is, in the last analysis, self-evidencing and axiomatic. We do not need to argue about the truth of goodness, beauty and love. They commend themselves to our whole being. Whether we are always conscious of it or not, the fact remains that *for us* truth is what we think it is, just what our innermost selves assent to as true. Our standard of the freedom of the truth then calls us to use all there is within us to understand all there is without us. It therefore does not end in uncertainty nor set up as an authority whatever we may wish to believe. Does it not, even so, enthrone our individual fancies and caprices? "In reply," urges Professor Bowne, "we may say that private prejudices, whims and desires can never be any proper grounds for belief, but the great catholic interests and tendencies of the race may well be a good ground for belief; for these reveal the essential structure and needs of the mind, and have all the logical significance of any great cosmic product. They are made for

## *The Freedom of the Truth*

us rather than by us, and they cannot be discredited without involving our whole system of knowledge in disaster." Our standard is just the opposite of pure subjectivism. It grounds itself in the great outer world of truth.

Have we not, therefore, arrived at a most adequate and satisfactory solution of our question of authority? It sets us free, in perfect accord with our intellectual attitude of a candid, frank search for the truth, but it anchors us to the common objective standard of the truth. Whether we think of the intellectual realm, or the religious problem, or life as a whole, this conclusion is fundamental. Everywhere, and under all circumstances, the truth emancipates, liberates, sets free. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH

IT seems perfectly natural and logical now to go forward to a statement of the sources of our truth. We have set up as our intellectual attitude, a fearless, open-minded, candid search for the truth. Nothing else can satisfy us. Although this involved a consideration of the whole problem of authority we have emerged from that discussion only more certain that our intellectual point of view is tenable and satisfying. It seems now less a creature of our own making. It is not simply a figment of our imagination but links itself into the very make of our intellectual universe. It tells us we are justified in our love of reality and assures us that there is, outside of ourselves, a great abiding objective standard of truth. It convinces us that both sides of life are permanently involved in the effort to understand the world. The active mind has its prerogatives and must be given its full liberties. The anchor which saves it from drifting into the shoals of subjectivism is the stable, fixed order of truth. The mind is reaching out after reality. Whither shall it go? What

## *Source of Christian Truth*

are the sources whence it may draw its knowledge?

It becomes more practical and beneficial for us to limit our search to the sources of Christian truth because our entire undertaking in this book has related itself to the intensely vital issues which center in our religious living. We have endeavored at every point to make it clear, however, that our standards are universal, that our intellectual attitude is valid for every field of knowledge, and that special standards or tests need not be set up for the realm of religion. It would be more strictly logical, therefore, at this juncture to attempt a recital of the sources of all truth, but such a task completely transcends the bounds of our volume and lies outside of our present purpose. In such an effort we would conclude with God himself who is the Source of all life and the Creator of all being. Let us, therefore, without in any sense altering our method, or conditioning its universality, limit ourselves to the very practical problem of the sources of Christian truth. It becomes plain that we are now more and more entering upon the distinctly constructive portion of our task. Here then, is a modern man, trained scientifically and critically, whose whole intellectual aim and point of view demands the truth so far as it can be found. He recognizes no other authority. The freedom of the truth is his goal and suggests his method of approach to problems of the mind. With a free, unhampered reason he

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

is reaching out for the truth of religion and more specifically of the Christian religion. Whither shall he turn? What can we point to as the sources of Christian truth?

First, we must begin with a clear and unqualified insistence that this truth is not separate from or inconsistent with his other knowledge. In fact, all of his knowledge must serve as one of the sources of his Christian truth. The traditional notion that somehow religious belief must be put into a compartment by itself, that it is out of relation to the rest of man's knowledge and frequently contradicts it, is utterly untenable and absurd. All knowledge is one. We shall not expect man to accept truth in this field which he cannot relate to truth in any field. If we remember the nature of the problem of the modern Christian as set forth in Chapter V, we must realize at once that it involves our understanding of many fields. His philosophy should give him some adequate conception of the universe and the cause lying back of it; his psychology should help him to understand the nature of personality and the laws of its development, change and growth; his ethics should lead him to a tenable conception of the nature of goodness, of duty, responsibility, freedom and the ideals or standards for individual and social conduct; his biology should enable him to understand man's relationship to his world and other life; his sociology should emphasize his duties and obligations to mankind and its

## *Source of Christian Truth*

organized agencies; his science in general should give him some conception of the world, the laws which are operative within it and the ultimate nature of matter. Now all of these subjects throw clear light upon many of the problems of religion. They help to determine the point of view, the general attitude and the inner spirit with which one approaches the subject and serve as one of the great sources of religious truth. Again let it be stated emphatically that a man's intellectual life is a unity and that religion does not endeavor to thrust upon him theories, hypotheses and beliefs contradictory to his fundamental conclusions in other fields.

Having obviated any difficulties arising from the assumption that religion is inclined to disregard reason, let us recognize as the chief source of religious truth for the modern Christian, Jesus himself. Thus we endeavor to go straight to the center of our problem. At the very outset we must insist that Christ is the primary source of the Christian religion. If we work our way back to Him we shall see the force of this assertion growing upon us. We cannot attribute to the Fourth Gospel the same sort of authenticity that we do to the Synoptic traditions, but unquestionably the Johannine account conveys to us a very early and sympathetic interpretation of the impression which Jesus made upon His followers. It is within a century of his contemporaries, and consequently must speak a very significant message,



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

particularly if we find that interpretation confirmed by the earliest Gospels and even by the consciousness of Jesus himself. John's Gospel then must not be disregarded in our present undertaking. It tells us that "the Word" was "full of grace and truth," that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." In the eighth chapter, Jesus is engaged in a conflict with the Jews and exclaims: "But because I say the truth, ye believe me not." That this conception was deeply implanted in the soul of Jesus there can be no possible question.

There is a scene described in the eighteenth chapter which amply attests this statement. Jesus is on trial for His life before the Roman governor. He has already been convicted by the Sanhedrin and is now standing before the man upon whose word depends dismissal or death. The charge brought against Him now, in contrast to that urged before the Jewish court, is that of "kingship." He is accused of treason against the Roman government. Pilate puts the searching question to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answers with equal directness but apparently in terms which confuse the governor: "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate as a practical Roman judge is not accustomed to a prisoner of this type nor to conceptions of this character. He, therefore, reiterates his question only with greater definiteness secured by stripping it of any reference to the Jews. "Art thou a King then?" The question now con-

## *Source of Christian Truth*

cerns Jesus' whole conception of Himself, His message and His work. It becomes necessary for Him instantly to give a solemn statement of His life purpose and mission. The significance of His answer, the depth of its meaning, the fundamental importance of the statement are all made evident by the expressions which are used. In keeping with the thought world of his day, the writer of the Fourth Gospel puts into the mouth of Jesus terms which take us back into a preëxistent world. The words, therefore, carry the deepest and most sacred implication. Jesus replies: "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." It is the clear, unequivocal, solemn declaration by Jesus of His life purpose. He tells us that the whole object of His mission is to bear witness unto the truth, that the center and focus of His life is truth, that He is a priest of the truth.

Again the Fourth Gospel attributes to Jesus, just at the close of His life, a very clear and deep assurance to His own inner group of disciples. He was speaking of the future. Thomas, the disciple who instinctively questioned everything, did not understand Him. "We know not whither thou goest, how know we the way?" "Jesus said unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Here, in reality, we find Jesus' method for the realization of His life purpose. In His bearing wit-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ness to the truth, He Himself was its highest expression. "I am the truth." If we ask how Christ manifested the truth, we shall not find it fully set forth in what He did or said or even in the beautiful qualities of strength which He manifested. We find it expressed completely only in what He himself was. He bore witness to the truth by impersonating it. If we endeavor to find the world's deepest and most satisfying truth about the art of living, we shall find it gathered up and expressed in Jesus. He could justly say, "I am the truth." "I am he in whom the truth is summed up and impersonated."

As we leave John's Gospel and go back to Paul, we find precisely the same idea—namely, that Jesus Christ is the center and source of Christian truth and life. To the Ephesians he wrote: "But ye did not so learn Christ; if so be that ye heard him, and were taught in him, *even as truth is in Jesus.*" From the moment Paul experienced his heavenly vision on the way to Damascus he accepted Christ as the spiritual master and lord of his life. Christ was the very source of his inspiration and strength. "For to me to live is Christ. . . . It is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me. . . . I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." Here too was the burden of his message and the invariable theme of his letters. "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable

## *Source of Christian Truth*

riches of Christ." In fact, in establishing his doctrine of Christ, Paul departed widely from the directness and simplicity of his Master's own teaching. He developed dogmas about the life and death of Jesus which have dominated Christian thought for centuries. But in doing so he has left us in no doubt about his chief source of Christian truth—it was "Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone." It is not necessary for our present purpose to defend the Christology of Paul's writings, but we can make clear that he recognized without any qualifications the supremacy and uniqueness of Jesus, "for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; *that in all things he might have the preëminence.*" It is obvious that a wide chasm exists between such a passage as this from Paul and the vital, direct, simple teachings of Jesus himself. But the point which is amply attested is that Christ had been recognized by Paul as the very soul of Christianity.

Again, if we go back of Paul to Christ's own immediate disciples the same primary fact emerges, that they recognized him as the embodiment of their religion. At the close of the great Mountain Sermon we read in Matthew;

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.” Why were they astonished? Simply because Jesus spoke with a clear ringing note of positiveness and conviction born out of his own soul. Repeatedly He had announced: “Ye have heard that it was said” so and so by your scribes, “but I say unto you” the truth lies deeper than these externalities and outward appearances. Jesus constantly assumed the position of an authoritative teacher. The scribes did not venture to speak for themselves but supported every assertion by citations from the law and its interpretations. No wonder is it then that the multitudes were astonished when a teacher appeared who taught them upon His own authority, because of the truth which He felt in His own consciousness. Clearly, this is the distinct impression which He made upon those nearest to Him. Not only in specific sayings such as we have just quoted but in the entire attitude of the disciples and others do we see this recognition of Jesus’ spiritual authority, of the fact that He was the source and creator of Christian truth.

There can be but one further step. Starting with the Johannine tradition we have gradually worked backward through Paul and Christ’s own disciples, finding at every point that Jesus was recognized as the source of Christian truth. We come now to Jesus himself. Does He give

## *Source of Christian Truth*

evidence of such a consciousness? We must see that this was Jesus' claim for Himself. We need not depend here upon the very direct and clear assertions of the Fourth Gospel which we have already dwelt upon, but within the Synoptic accounts themselves we find evidence of a unique inner spirit in Jesus. His attitude to the Scribes and Pharisees throughout reveals just such a consciousness of truth. The bitter, stinging invectives found in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew's Gospel show unmistakably that Jesus was conscious of deeper spiritual realities than the recognized religious leaders of his day. He reveals a unique attitude when He says: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil." In Chapter VII we have seen somewhat at length the significance of this saying, revealing as it does Jesus' attitude to the past and His clear purpose to construct a better, deeper, more spiritual future. If, however, we need a saying establishing beyond doubt Jesus' own appreciation of His uniqueness and supremacy, we find it in Matthew XI. 27-29: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." We shall let those matchless words speak their own message. They signify a unique, lofty consciousness in Jesus or they are meaningless. He must have been what He claimed to be or else a most erratic, inconsistent and rabid fanatic. Unquestionably, in our search for the sources of Christian truth, we must place Christ in the central and supreme place. The emphasis, too, must not be focused so much upon His teachings, as upon Himself. Not what He did and taught but what He was, the total impression of His life and character, becomes our chief source of Christian truth. Auguste Sabatier expresses this interpretation eloquently when he writes: "His (Jesus') authority is not that of any letter whatsoever; it arises from the outshining of the inner consciousness of Jesus, a radiation of holiness, of love, of the presence of God within Him. . . . In the last analysis, and to go down to the very root of the Christian religion, to be a Christian is not to acquire a notion of God, or even an abstract doctrine of His paternal love; it is to live over, within ourselves, the inner, spiritual life of Christ, and by union of our heart with His to *feel* in ourselves the presence of a Father and the reality of our filial relation to Him, just as Christ felt in Himself the Father's presence and His filial relation to Him. It is not a question of a new teaching, but of a transformed consciousness. *Christ is far more than the highest authority*

## *Source of Christian Truth*

*in Christianity; He is Christianity itself."*

Anyone, therefore, who really desires to understand the Christian religion must seek the Christ. He is its center and source. Let the reader in humility and the spirit of teachableness go to Christ, endeavoring to sense His attitude to life, to fellow men, to duty and to the Father; let him study His spirit and consciously undertake to live as Christ lived; let him hate sin, love righteousness, and be willing to suffer for others as Christ did; let him develop the same clear consciousness of his relationship to the Father, the same certainty that goodness will triumph, the same appreciation of service, sacrifice and love, and then in his own inner experience he will find the answer to the question with which we are dealing. Christ alone, experienced in our own religious living, is the all sufficient and necessary source of Christian truth.

Here then we might end our search. But just where shall we find Christ? Because some nineteen centuries have intervened between Him and us, because men and women accepting Him as their spiritual master have endeavored to apply His great principles to the environment in which they found themselves, because His followers have been trying in so many different ways to live over again His life, because so many writers have undertaken to explain or interpret His life, we find ourselves confronted by a very complicated and perplexing situation. The cry "Back to Jesus" awak-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ens a hearty and sympathetic response within us, but the path is covered over and hidden in many places and obstructed and rendered well-nigh impassable in others. So much stands between us and Jesus that we must consider the problem which remains even when we do recognize Christ as Christianity itself.

The very best external source of Christian truth is the Bible. This assertion is sustained by the fact that Christ is the central personality of the Scriptures. It is universally conceded that it contains the best record of the life of Jesus. It includes at least three documents written by men who knew Christ intimately and accompanied Him in His ministry. It contains a book from an unknown hand which interprets His person and teachings in the terms of a contemporary philosophy. It contains many letters of the Apostle Paul who was only once removed from Christ himself. Paul knew the disciples Peter and James and other followers such as Barnabas. He was very close to the beginnings of Christianity. There can be no possible doubt that the Bible is *the* source book for the student of Christianity. It not only describes Christ's life, but shows us the expression of His life in that of His immediate followers. The *logia* or sayings of Jesus as found in Matthew unquestionably represent with accuracy the spirit and point of view of His teachings. Back of all the New Testament documents, lie those of the Old Testament. These are an

## *Source of Christian Truth*

invaluable source because they enable the student to arrive at a better appreciation of the background upon which Jesus appeared, and to comprehend the thought world out of which His message grew. It needs no argument to sustain the statement that much of Jesus' thought was shaped by the teachings of the Old Testament. The prophets and the law were a part of His early training. It is not astonishing, therefore, that a very intimate and close relationship is discernible between Judaism and Christianity. Hermann Schultz goes so far as to maintain that "there is positively not one New Testament idea that cannot be conclusively shown to be a healthy and natural product of some Old Testament germ, nor any truly Old Testament idea which did not instinctively press towards its New Testament fulfilment." In any case it becomes plain that the Old Testament must be utilized in our search for Christian truth.

We now begin to see the really vital use which the modern man makes of his Bible. It is an external authority for him because here he finds truth about his religion. What a flood of light this casts over a perplexing question. It now becomes unnecessary to defend it against the attacks of those who fail to grasp its real significance. It is the best source of Christ's life. It stands as the unparalleled record of the life of God expressing itself in the life of Christ and others. It is a record of the personal experiences of men living in an

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

actual world. It conveys the truth which they felt compelled to utter. It comes through human hands and hearts and bears all the inevitable marks of living, virile men. It is authoritative because it records the truth which men have experienced in the service of God and His Kingdom. It now becomes apparent that the modern Christian has a conception of his Bible which enables him to be undisturbed as men seek to study and understand it. In fact, it is just this process which helps him to the fullest use of his Bible. No exposure of its defects or flaws, no theory of its composition can alter in the slightest degree its value as a record of Christ's life of the lives of men of God. It can only make it more vital, more real and therefore more spiritually helpful. Consequently, he is not troubled by the activities of higher critics nor by the conclusions of historical and literary criticism. He is helped by them and rejoices in them. He loves the truth and yearns for its freedom. So again let him who desires to know Christ, study his Bible historically, systematically and thoroughly. Herein he will find much that will lead him to a genuine appreciation of Christianity. Let him approach it as he would any other literature. It will speak its own message and attest its own unparalleled worth. As Coleridge has said: "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together."

Again, remembering that our aim is to find



## *Source of Christian Truth*

the truth of Christianity, we cannot confine ourselves to the Bible but must search everywhere for the evidences and effects of Christ's life in the actual experiences of His followers. Christianity is not a book, or a system of doctrines, or an organization, but it is a life. It is man's life, lived as Christ did, in relation to God's life. Whatever therefore helps us to an understanding of that life is an important source of Christian truth. We now see opening before us the entire history of the Christian centuries, including the present. We witness a most interesting and curious development of a great religion. Not only the fundamental separation of the Church occasioned by the Reformation demands our attention, but all of the varied forms in which Christian life manifested itself. The ascetic movement, monasticism, the Crusades, religious wars, theological controversies, missionary efforts and all the activities undertaken in the name of Jesus Christ must show to us, by their error or truth, where we may find the sources of Christian truth. As Professor William Adams Brown points out: "Theology must make room among its sources for all the utterances of the Christian spirit. . . . Most important among these are the creeds in which from time to time the church has made formal confession of her faith, and the systems in which she has tried to relate her convictions to contemporary thought, and to justify the Christian claim before the bar of reason." As the searcher after



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Christian truth struggles through this great mass of data he will find much which he approves and much which he rejects. He will see that sometimes the followers of Christ have departed far from His spirit of love and forgiveness. Often they have followed Him "afar off." At times they have betrayed Him. But beneath the errors there has continued the unbroken stream of Christ's influence. Sooner or later, no matter how impure and stagnant it may have become, it has emerged clear and strong to give new life and satisfaction to mankind. In all these varied manifestations there has been Christian truth, but a study of the history of Christianity, a critical examination of the history of Christian thought, an investigation of its creeds and systems, does not lay upon the modern man any necessity to live the Christ life precisely as others have lived it, nor to interpret it in their terms, nor to accept their creeds. If the modern Christian finds no system which satisfies his interpretation of Christ, let him construct his own system, if he cannot accept the Nicene or Apostles' Creed, and multitudes cannot, let him make his own creed. Only let him be very sure that it complies both with his experience and the objective standard of Christ's teaching and life. The vital point here is simply this: Christianity is a life and therefore the actual experience of Christians in all centuries may serve as a source of its truth. Just so today contemporary re-

## *Source of Christian Truth*

ligious life and thought must challenge our attention if we are thorough and accurate. The whole modern social movement is a new interpretation of Christ's message of service and brotherhood. Likewise the marvelous missionary activities and triumphs of the last century and of today have produced an entirely new appreciation of his teachings. Here Christianity is brought into immediate contact with other great world religions. It is compelled to slough off many of its non-essentials and its purely Western forms and to adjust itself to the demands of Eastern civilization and the methods of Oriental thought. Christianity in Turkey, India, China and Japan has been "naturalized" and in the process new insights into its universality and reasonableness have been acquired. Christian experience everywhere and in all times, in Christ's own consciousness, in the life of His disciples, in Paul, in the monks, in the church fathers, in the reformers, in the Pilgrim Fathers, in the modern social worker, in the missionary, in the life of every disciple who has espoused Christianity, becomes the source of Christian truth. Our modern man, therefore, if he follows his problem scientifically will find new meanings and new values in Christianity as he studies the lives and thoughts of great Christians such as St. Augustine, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Phillips Brooks, or Henry Ward Beecher. Professor Williston

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Walker's volume entitled *Great Men of the Christian Church* is splendidly adapted to such a purpose.

It has doubtless become obvious to the reader that our thought is drawing us on to but one conclusion—namely, that our own individual experience, as a follower of Christ, must become for us an important if not an ultimate source of Christian truth. Christianity began in the experience of its Founder. The Bible is our chief external source because it is a record of Christ's life in the lives of His followers, and of God's life in that of His children. We have already seen (Chapter VII) that there can be no possible conflict between our reason and the revelation so-called of the Bible. In fact, there is some evidence for believing that Jesus himself taught that our personal experience must serve as our source of Christian truth. "Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth." This tradition clearly assumes that Christ's followers would gradually and ultimately appropriate more Christian truth through their experience of Him. Similarly the pragmatic test is expressed in the words, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching." Through an actual living of Christ's truth, through a vital union with Him, through a definite, clear purpose to do His will, we are assured that we shall find a final test of the truth of Christ's religion. Moreover, the pathetic expression of Jesus on that last night

## *Source of Christian Truth*

with his disciples shows His clear confidence that they would ultimately know Him more fully and understand Him more deeply. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." No apology is needed for the fact that all these verses come from the latest of the four Gospels. They are not cited as the actual words of Jesus. They do, however, create a clear supposition, appearing where they do, that Jesus had emphasized the vital doctrine which they express. They would not be used unless they did convey a truth attested by the experience of multitudes of people. Referring to this last citation from John's Gospel, Dr. V. H. Stanton says: "A portion of truth only could be communicated by Christ to His disciples during His time on earth, because they were unprepared to receive it. And it can never be comprised fully in any formulæ." Only by a vital experience of truth do we ever find it. This principle is true for education in any field and for all stages of development. No person learns more than his own experience makes vital. Inner development and outer action are coördinate. The receptivity of the disciples conditioned their knowledge of Christ. Our receptivity must likewise limit our understanding of Him. The more deeply and truly we live the life of a Christian, the more certain will our knowledge become. Our own experience must be the source of our Christian truth.

This was Paul's method. His whole concep-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

tion of Christian truth was derived from his own experience. In what is perhaps his earliest epistle he makes this absolutely clear to the Galatians: "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." It becomes perfectly evident that Paul did not accept his religion or his beliefs from other men. They were a part of his own inner experience of Christ. When Paul became conscious that it was his mission to proclaim Christ among the Gentiles he did not do what many modern men would have done—immediately consult with those "who were of repute," but he thought the problem through for himself. "Straightway," he says, "I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me; but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned unto Damascus." The burden of the early chapters of his letter to the Galatians is their unexpected adoption of a perverted gospel and his absolute certainty that he had preached unto them the true gospel grounded in his own union with Christ and not gathered from fallible men. "I have been crucified with Christ," he says to them, "and it is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me." This is the universal method of finding knowledge. Truth is everywhere related to life. It is only truth as it becomes *our* truth.

## *Source of Christian Truth*

So as we conclude our search for the sources of Christian truth we come back to our starting point. Jesus Christ stands preëminently as the giver of Christian light. We must know Him, appreciate His spirit, live as He lived, and be sure of the eternal spiritual verities as He was sure of them. The whole question is related to experience,—to the experience of Christ and then to the experience of His followers in all places and times since, even down to our own personal individual manifestation of the Christian spirit. Professor Brown reached the center of our question when he wrote, “As the first condition of understanding life is to live, so the primary condition of understanding religion is to be religious.” Any other method must inevitably be purely theoretical, subjective and partial. Since the real primary source of Christian truth is a person, it is something vital and expanding, not fixed and stagnant. Christian experience in the past has enriched Christian truth and so today our generation must accept its splendid obligations to manifest Christ’s life and spirit in deeper and richer forms than it has yet known. The searcher after Christian truth finds himself called to a genuine Christlike life. He must find his truth by living it. His daily conduct must gather it all up and impersonate it. He must *be* the truth. Thus and thus alone will he find the source of Christian truth. It is linked inseparably with life. It is anchored back in the deep things of



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

the soul. "If you can think and not make thoughts your aim," says Rudyard Kipling in expressing this fact, for however deeply we meditate upon the ultimate problems of life they bring us straight back to daily experience. Our thoughts are grounded in action. The appeal then becomes intensely practical. Our intellectual attitude is nothing other than a candid, fearless, irresistible search for truth. We must know the truth to gain our intellectual freedom. As we seek for our sources of Christian truth we find them in Christ and man's experience, our experience, of Him. If we can but know Him, if the same mind can be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, if we can hate sin and love the sinner, if we can exalt inner spiritual life and banish hypocrisy, if we can love service and forget our own comfort, if we can know our Heavenly Father with His certainty and assurance, if we can suffer and sacrifice and dethrone self, if we can take up our cross daily and follow him, then we may hope "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

## X

### WHAT THE MODERN CHRISTIAN BELIEVES

THE desire of the mind for constructive thinking is natural and commendable. It seems not only perfectly logical but wise to go forward now to the briefest sort of a summary of what the modern Christian believes. Having determined that we shall secure our intellectual independence by a tireless, insistent search after truth, and having endeavored to point out the sources of Christian truth, the next step seems to require us to ask what the modern man has found who has gone to these sources. Strictly speaking, it is the task of every man to formulate his beliefs for himself. But we recognize as one of the sources deserving our careful consideration the thought and beliefs of Christians everywhere. It may therefore prove helpful if we attempt to set down some of the generally accepted conclusions in regard to the content of Christian belief.

It is essential to observe very clearly the exact subject of this chapter. We must remember the distinction between knowledge and

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

belief. We are dealing neither with the theology nor the fixed dogma, nor the unquestioned certainties of the modern man, but with his beliefs, his convictions, the things to which he clings with assurance and confidence. While they may not be sustained by the nicety and precision of mathematical demonstration, nevertheless they are the things which he accepts implicitly, in which he puts his trust and upon which he builds his religious faith. They are the things which he believes. Moreover, we must understand that we are dealing with the beliefs of a *modern* man. There is no occasion to state the views which prevailed a generation or two ago. Such beliefs have their historic interest and have contributed their part to current thought. They are of high value in our search for truth but the purpose of this chapter could not be realized by their presentation. We desire to know what men can and do accept today. In the light of present knowledge with its new acquisitions and conclusions, in the presence of critical scholarship and investigation, in a day when science has dominated so thoroughly the thoughts of thinking men, we ask what are men believing about religion? Again, our subject assumes that this modern man is a Christian. We wish to know the belief, the faith, the trust of a man in our day and in the midst of conditions which have tested fundamentally the religious ideas of our generation, who frankly but reverently, sanely but devoutly professes to be a follower of Jesus

## *Modern Christian Belief*

Christ, and is seeking to manifest, in his daily living, loyalty and love to Him as the King and Lord of his life. What does the modern Christian believe?

It will be well to observe that in the preceding chapters we have from time to time used as illustrative material various doctrines and have attempted to trace the changing attitudes to them. It becomes evident that we shall not need in this chapter to consider the modern man's belief about his Bible. That question for our present undertaking has already been amply treated. Moreover, in Chapter VI we discussed at some length the origin and constitution of man. The treatment there of these and other subjects was fortunately of such a nature that we need not be occupied unduly here with the mysteries and uncertainties of our faith. We are ready now for our positive convictions. It is scarcely necessary to point out that it must not be expected that we can even mention many important beliefs. Large volumes are devoted alone to the separate doctrines of God, and Christ and Man. In reality all that can be hoped for within the brief space of a chapter is merely an indication of the modern intellectual attitude to these subjects. The very comprehensiveness of our task renders it at once rather difficult and unsatisfactory, but there is value in concise statements of conclusions. Particularly today, without undue detail, we want to know the results of investigations in a field. Let us, therefore, take our

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

stand upon the mountain top and view the panorama as a whole. The details of the landscape have their fascination and value but now we are to look upon the picture in its entirety. We shall concentrate our attention upon three outstanding features.

### ABOUT MAN.

Let us begin with that which lies nearest to us and that in which we naturally have a keen interest. What does the modern Christian believe about man? Without any quibbles or apologies for a traditional term we must begin by saying that he believes that man is actually a sinner. By this is not meant just what the older theology taught. As we shall see we are not now speaking of so-called "original sin" but of those actions and choices of the individual by which he fails to rise to the best there is in him, by which he chooses a lower in the presence of a higher good. In other words when we recognize the fact of universal human sinfulness, we mean that man is not what he ought to be or may be. Now, theoretically, this is not explained in the same terms nor under the same interpretations of life as it once was. Formerly a man was regarded as a sinner because he had inherited an inevitable taint or flaw from the past due to the sin of the first man, Adam. Man was originally perfect and sinless and then by a sudden, strange catastrophic fall he became hopelessly sinful. Adam committed *the* original sin and thereafter all

## *Modern Christian Belief*

mankind was guilty of "original sin." Our wills were all in Adam. He was the representative of the human race. Human nature as a mass fell when Adam sinned. His choice was our choice. His sin was our sin. Our guilt arises because we were in Adam. So ran the old traditional doctrine of original sin. As the writer has developed at greater length elsewhere, the absurd extremes to which theologians went in expanding this doctrine were astounding. The way in which man's supposed original perfection was enlarged upon was a sad commentary upon the intelligence of mankind. Bishop Bull dwelt upon the marvelous wisdom of Adam exhibited in his naming without meditation the innumerable varieties of animals which were brought before him. The astounding fact is that God approved the nomenclature. He says in concluding this account: "What single man, among all the philosophers since the Fall, what Plato, what Aristotle, etc., among the ancients, what Descartes or Gassendi among the moderns, nay, what Royal Society durst have undertaken this?" Similarly Bishop South characterizes Aristotle as the rubbish of Adam.

If we endeavor to account for the origin of this belief, two facts appear: (1) It is an inevitable tendency of all nations to look back into a distant and remote past and idealize their progenitors; (2) such a tendency is manifested in the story of Eden. Once in the Hebrew canon this splendid allegory was accepted as



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

actual history by the Church and her teachers, and then its details were enlarged upon until it reached the absurd limits which we have just described.

In rejecting this feature of the old doctrine of original sin, this idea of man's original perfection and righteousness, there is no need of denying the universal sinfulness of mankind. To do so is only to confuse the facts of experience with a purely speculative explanation as to the origin of these facts. To reject the idea of Adam's moral fall does not deny the present existence of that all-pervading blemish of human life which for centuries has been explained by that fall. That all men sin is a fact beyond doubt. The denial of any theoretic explanation of the reason for that universal fact will never alter its truth.

The real question then becomes not what the present condition of mankind is, but what it was originally. Now clearly two hypotheses present themselves. (1) Man was originally righteous and perfect, but by some strange and striking accident he became hopelessly sinful. (2) Man was originally a non-moral being and gradually emerged from that stage into a state of increasing moral value. The real issue then is this: Was man's original condition chaos or harmony? That both possibilities may be conceived cannot be denied. "A chaos not yet reduced to order" and a "wreck and ruin of a once fair and perfect harmony" cannot be distinguished from one another. The struggle to

## *Modern Christian Belief*

control the heritage of a sensuous past must present the same scene of inner conflict as the discord arising from strife with a ruined but originally perfect moral nature. That this double possibility exists is then to be conceded.

Which of these possibilities shall the modern man choose? The intellectual point of view advocated in these pages demands that we search for the truth wherever it may be found. Obviously the orthodox attitude to the Scriptures establishes the traditional doctrine of original sin. But historical and literary criticism have developed an entirely new interpretation and explanation of these Biblical sources. Biology has given us within a generation totally new conceptions of man's development. It is perfectly evident that evolution in its major contentions must be accepted. It is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine any such original state of perfection as the older doctrine presupposed. The various sciences all add their weight to this general conclusion. Astronomy, cosmic chemistry and geology reveal a world developing through long ages. Paleontology, embryology and anthropology point to unnumbered cycles and generations even before written history begins. Comparative religion reveals primitive moral conditions which argue ill for original righteousness. The whole basis of the doctrine of original sin is thus undermined and made unstable. The mind familiar with modern scientific conceptions finds it impossible to accept the thought of any originally perfect

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

condition of man. We are compelled to reject the idea of a catastrophic fall and regard man's moral condition from another point of view. *Man's fall was his rise.* As we conceive of man's development from the modern biological point of view we see at once that when moral consciousness emerged, when he became aware of distinctions between right and wrong, when there arose the possibility of sin, then man had risen to new heights. His present sinful condition is not due to some falling away, some defection from an original uprightness. His condition must be described rather as a present non-attainment.

Now this speculative approach to the question of man's sin must not be allowed to blind us to the reality and awfulness of sin. The fact of sin is the same whether we explain it by one theory or the other. The important point here is, that for the modern Christian by this interpretation of sin, he has a doctrine which conflicts in no way with scientific interpretations of man's origin. Moreover here is new and deep spiritual reality. The doctrine of original sin recognized fully and completely the universality of sin, but it provided a very weak explanation of our responsibility for it. To say that we sinned in Adam and are, therefore, guilty seems to lack in moral perspicuity and cogency. By no leap in logic or stretching of the imagination can a modern man be made to believe that he was personally in Adam. The terrible antinomy which must be resolved is

## *Modern Christian Belief*

this: All men sin and each man is responsible. Now modern science, as well as Augustinian theology links us all together as a human family. Evolution does not destroy the idea of race solidarity but emphasizes it. Just so it gives us a more tenable theory of sin. Our conception of sin is being clarified. It is not interpreted any longer as an act of our wills in some remote representative man. It is an act of our wills here and now, an act which we could have altered had we chosen. The modern idea of sin connects us with our past even more firmly than the older theology and it deepens intensely our own direct guilt for it. Sin no longer can be regarded merely as an ineradicable taint inherited from a "homo generalis" but it is our present failure to be what we ought to be. Sin thus becomes infinitely more real and terrible than when it was sheltered beneath a mechanical thought world. It is a failure to dethrone self, to subordinate our selfish desires and ambitions. It is a manifestation of the loveless spirit.

If we remember that Jesus Christ is the chief source of Christian truth then our conception of sin must be simply the contradiction of what he was and taught. He exalted love and service as the great ideals of life. Sin then becomes simply and purely lovelessness and selfishness. In an unpublished manuscript the late Professor George Barker Stevens wrote: "The Christian idea of sin, then, is this: It is the opposite of the Christlike spirit; it consists in

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

the dispositions, motives and principles which are contrary to those which ruled and shaped His life. It is lovelessness, selfishness, disregard of the rights and interests of other men, indifference to those universal and imperative obligations which constitute the changeless moral order. This is what sin is, whenever and however it began and whatever be the method of its propagation or the reason for its universality." Christ lived in close personal relationship to His Father. The filial attitude is the heart of His religion. Sin then becomes a violation of the relationship existing between the Creator and His creature. It is the unfilial life, the wandering from the Father. It is an exaltation of self, the annihilation of the real self by submission to the selfish nature. Now the modern Christian accepts the belief that man is a sinner, and in so doing he finds no contradictions to his scientific knowledge, but thereby deepens rather than decreases his sense of sin.

On the other hand, the modern Christian believes that he is potentially a son of God. He accepts the value which Christ Himself placed upon the individual. He believes that a man is not to be measured by the number of times he has fallen but by his ability to rise from the fall. In fact this is what life is—a gradual steady upward progress toward the good. The inspiring fact about man is not that he is lost but that he may be found, not that he is a sinner but that he may become a saint. The primary



## *Modern Christian Belief*

fact about man is not that sometimes he sins, but that always he possesses infinite capacities and potentialities for growth and expansion. There is absolutely nothing in all the universe that can be compared to man. There is nothing anywhere that should be given in exchange for life. Every man is of priceless value and every soul is of supreme worth. Even the hated publicans and sinners are worthy of friendship. "A spark has disturbed our clod." The glory and divinity of life lie not in what a man is but what he may become. Man's duty is to actualize his possibilities and to realize himself. Here is unbounded inspiration. This belief of the modern man in the worth and richness of life is entirely in accord with Jesus' own conception of it. It puts the emphasis in the right place. Without being accused of a declining sense of sin, we can point to man's inherent worth and dignity. The modern attitude is positive and inspirational, rather than negative and humiliating. Man is a sinner but he conquers that sin as he goes forward to the fine utilization of his capacities and the gradual realization of his divine birthright. The modern man believes himself to be a child of the Father.

Again the modern man recognizes clearly that he is a responsible being. There is a distinctly ethical emphasis to his thought and a corresponding ethical sternness in accepting his obligations. As we have already seen our conception of sin brings guilt close to the sinner. He



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

is the one who has committed the sin and he, therefore, is the one who must bear the responsibility. He does not look for escape from penalty through either human or divine forgiveness. He sees that punishment inevitably inheres in sin. He knows that "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." He sees that penalty is logically related to his deeds, that there is a reasonableness in punishment. If he puts his hand into the fire he knows it will be burned. He understands that nature is inexorable in her administration of penalty. He believes that evil consequences necessarily and inevitably inhere in evil deeds. He thinks that punishment is not the whim or caprice of an Infinite Judge so much as it is the logical and rational effect of a cause which he himself has set in operation. With courage and manly fortitude he accepts uncomplainingly the consequences of his deeds and does not strive to drag forgiveness down to the selfish level of mere removal of penalty. These statements must not be interpreted as excluding the possibility of forgiveness. The modern Christian recognizes that forgiveness was probably "Christ's most striking innovation in morality." We are simply asserting the deep, genuine, unqualified acceptance of stern responsibility by the modern man. Facts are facts. He does not falter in their presence or struggle to escape from them. He is essentially scientific.

This attitude to obligation determines the

## *Modern Christian Belief*

modern Christian's reaction to sin. Whether he is a determinist or a libertarian his belief compels him to conquer evil. As a determinist he may suppose that he is dominated by the passion to make the environment of himself and others in the future what it should be, or as a libertarian he may believe that he must determine his own future. In either case, whatever his attitude to freedom, however he explains the origin or nature of sin and evil, he accepts his responsibility by evincing an unequivocal hatred of sin and by manifesting a clear purpose to master it. To him, evil exists to be conquered, cast down and eliminated. Not only in his own life but in our common interests he is the open avowed opponent of all forms of unrighteousness and iniquity. He is an apostle of true and holy living.

In other words, our modern Christian recognizes fully the logical demands of life. He sees that he is related to himself and that he can only be himself by struggling constantly for what he conceives to be good and worthy. He knows that he is inseparably linked to his neighbor and to society and that he can only be himself by striving unceasingly for a pure and clean community life. He believes that as God's son he is eternally related to the Father of his spirit and that he can only be himself by maintaining permanently a close personal relationship of filial communion with his God. His responsibility relates him to himself, to his neighbor and to his God.

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

This sense of responsibility expresses itself today in an unusually clear and practical acceptance of the belief that man is a social being, that he is responsible for the material and spiritual welfare of his neighbor. Our age stands for the clear enunciation of this truth. The modern social movement has put new content into Jesus' demand for love, expressed not only to God, but to our neighbor and for service rendered not only to our immediate circle of friends and relatives, but to the humble and poor everywhere. The modern Christian is social-minded, he is in the truest and highest sense a missionary, and his interests are universal. The settlement house, the hospital, the fresh air home, the play ground, and the mission station at home and abroad all claim his interest and require his devotion. His Christianity has been thoroughly socialized. His responsibility has assumed a most practical form and is revealing itself in many movements directed toward the best welfare of the entire community and world.

Furthermore, the modern Christian believes that he is immortal. Of the nature of this problem we have already spoken in Chapter VI. We must realize fully that it is not susceptible of logical demonstration or mathematical proof. The data at hand is altogether insufficient. Consequently, we must always remember that we are dealing not with knowledge but with belief, not with certainties, but with probabilities. It is somewhat significant that no satisfactory

## *Modern Christian Belief*

proof has ever been deduced to substantiate the theory that man is *not* immortal. When everything is considered, the cumulative effect of the probabilities are quite sufficient to lead one to practical confidence in this doctrine.

Arguments from analogy, from the authority of the Church and Bible, from idealistic philosophy have all been employed to establish this conclusion. It is within one's own heart and life, however, that he will find the deepest answers to this question. Man has always looked with more or less confidence to the future life. Without it, life is incomplete and deceptive. Evolution has shown that wherever in the universe life has reached out for something, that "something" has been there to satisfy it. Man's undying hope that there is life beyond cannot be a curious exception. Life always and everywhere is a quest. Not to prayer but to our total existence we must apply the words of Jesus "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Satisfaction is promised us for every worthy yearning of the soul. Our whole being expresses itself in great ideals which it knows can never be approached within the short period of a life time. The world is full of injustice, unfairness and vindictiveness which contradict our belief that we live in a universe of love and righteousness, if in this life only we see the ultimate and inevitable consequences that inhere in all sin. In short, limit life solely to this sphere and it becomes a stupendous

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

mockery and an empty phantom. Kant's argument is to the point here. Having established the thesis that man *ought* to be good, he recognized that life here was all too brief and therefore man must be immortal.

Moreover, our belief in God will influence largely our belief in immortality. If He is a holy, wise and loving Father and if we are His children, how can our existence cease? So here as everywhere in our search for Christian belief we must turn to Christ. Socrates and Plato ventured to hope for immortality. To Jesus it seemed a clear and unquestioned certainty. His quiet confidence and calm assurance and his almost complete reserve combined to produce a total attitude which is most satisfactory. Unquestionably, in perfect accord with the spirit of Jesus, the most marked tendency in recent thought has been one of increasing reticence and less effort to establish details. Men are no longer concerned about the geography of heaven. Life as never before is one. What life at its best is here we may hope that it will be there. It seems difficult to imagine that it could be otherwise. The time has passed when heaven is conceived of as a place which enables one to escape from hell and where its life is portrayed as one of unbroken rest and inactivity. If life here demands love and service and the opportunity to grow and develop, so life there will be dominated by love, filled with service and marked by progress and change.

## *Modern Christian Belief*

"I ask no heaven till earth be Thine,  
Nor glory crown, while work of mine  
Awaits me here:  
When earth shall shine among the stars,  
Her stains wiped out, her captives free,  
Her songs sweet music unto Thee,  
For crown give Thou new work to me."

Life is earnest, useful activity in this or any sphere. With the assurance of idealism that personality is not dependent upon the physical body, with the consciousness that life here and everywhere is marked by unbroken continuity and above all with Jesus' attitude and practice, we can find much to sustain the deep confidence that man is immortal. In proportion as we live the Christ life, in so far as we live as He did in filial relation with the Father, in that proportion and just so far are we liable to be assured of our immortality. As Professor William Adams Brown has written: "The world may perish; God can make other worlds to take its place. But what 'other' can take the place of a son in the Father's heart. Here, as always, we turn back to Christ. It is impossible to believe that such a life as His should have gone out in darkness. Our own hope of endless existence is wrapped up with the faith that we too may become like Christ." If we live deeply we shall live eternally, if we live spiritually, we cannot die.

This then is the modern Christian's belief about man. He links him inseparably with an evolving race and finds in his present state of non-attainment many evidences of his failure



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

to rise to his largest life. While he senses with perfect clearness the depth of man's sin, he believes that Jesus was right in teaching men that they are all sons of the Father. With a fine consciousness of ethical values, he accepts fully and unqualifiedly his responsibilities to himself, to his neighbor and to his God. He puts much emphasis upon his social duties—upon his obligations to mankind as a whole. He believes that the one who lives as Christ did is immortal. In such beliefs there is absolutely nothing which offends the critical scholar, but there is much which inspires the will and satisfies our religious natures.

### ABOUT GOD.

It seems absurd to attempt to state in a few paragraphs what the modern Christian believes about God. But there are certain points at which our interest focuses today, and some present tendencies and shiftings of emphasis which may justly claim our attention here. We shall not, of course, attempt to establish the existence of God. That problem too by its very nature is not susceptible to methods of "rigor and vigor." Philosophy and metaphysics are rightly concerned with a satisfactory explanation of the cause of all being, but here we shall do as Christianity does, *assume* the existence of God. In doing so and by going forward to a candid and fearless consideration of certain aspects of that belief we may do more for actual belief in God than by a lengthy pre-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

sentation of ontological, cosmological, teleological and subjective arguments for His existence.

Professor William Newton Clarke says that "God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains and orders all." Professor William Adams Brown follows this definition very closely but adds a worthy emphasis in relating it to Christ's life. To him, "God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who creates, sustains and orders the universe according to the wise, holy and loving character and purpose revealed in Jesus Christ; and who, through his spirit, indwelling in man, is ever at work in the world, calling men out of their sin and misery into the Kingdom of God, and by his redemptive grace, transforming individuals and society into the likeness of Christ." These definitions endeavor to state that God is (1) a person, (2) that he is a spirit, (3) that he is self-consistent, (4) that he is perfect goodness, (5) that he is intimately related to his world, and (6) that he has come to worthy expression in Jesus Christ.

The most significant change in our idea of God during the past generation concerns His relationship to His world. By the very nature of the problem, it was perfectly natural and logical that men should emphasize the truth that God is infinite and absolute, that He is always more than His created universe, that His unlimited powers completely exceed the demands of this world and that He is a person separate from and beyond all creatures. His life is

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

above that of all beings, He sits aloft separate and apart from finite things, He completely transcends the limitations of space and time and controls His universe *ab extra*. But such a conception of God is entirely one sided. It shuts God out of His world, removes Him from the daily life and affairs of mankind and in its extreme form gives us deism rather than theism,—that is, a world controlled by an absentee Creator rather than by a loving Father. This doctrine is called transcendence.

Now over against this conception has developed the clear idea that while God is above His world, He is also in it. That while He exceeds its life, He is also a part of it. Paul expressed this thought when he said that “in Him we live and move and have our being.” This conception insists upon God’s presence in all of His universe, upon His interest in all of our affairs, upon His love for all His creatures. His life becomes the world’s life. By His power, always present, he controls, sustains and orders all life. This doctrine is liable to fall into the error of believing that God is simply identical with the world, that His life is fully exhausted in the life of the universe, and in an extreme form runs off into pantheism which identifies all existence with God and robs Him of His personality. This doctrine is called immanence.

It becomes evident that in the union of the truth of these two ideas of immanence and transcendence, with a rigid exclusion of their

## *Modern Christian Belief*

error, we may find a satisfactory conception. God is in His World, but not identical with it, nor exhausted by it. The world derives its life from God, but God's life is something more than the world. He is a personal spirit, free and unhampered by His creation, but always present in it. As Professor Williston Walker has said: "It may well be questioned whether the most fundamental alteration that has come over our thinking is not its change in the conception of God. In place of a being exalted high above a world separate from him, whose every act he yet arbitrarily controls, revealed in miracle and theophany to ages long past, we have One in and of His world, in a true sense its life, manifesting Himself in uniform law in what we call the realm of nature, revealing His moral purpose through man, who is the best expression of his character, and above all in the highest and holiest of men our Lord Jesus Christ." It must be said that the most striking modern emphasis in our conception of God centers just here. Man is finding fresh life and new confidence in the conviction that God is immanent in His world.

Our next question, to which also immanence forces us, is the intricate and troublesome problem of the relation of the so-called "natural" and "supernatural." Doubtless no phase of our subject has been the occasion of more scientific men giving up a belief in God than just this one. If, as the older theology frequently maintained, belief in God required a belief in mir-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

acles, strange interventions in the natural order, in fact open and flagrant violations of natural law, then the man critically and scientifically trained simply was forced to give up his belief. In fact it is well within the borders of truth to say that religion found one of its chief attestations in the miracle as originally conceived. This was the test to which the man of God was subjected. Today we can say without any qualification that Christianity does not rest its case on miracles. The whole new scientific point of view has altered completely man's attitude to nature. It was perfectly natural that under the old interpretation of the universe men should strive to find proof of their God in some strange and astounding manifestation of His power by interference, from without, in the usual on-goings of life. It is equally natural today that man should find reasons for belief in his God in the law-abiding, orderly character of our world. So much has the attitude changed that even for the conservative theologian the miracles are more of a liability than an asset.

Let us now try to see the real issue in this question of the "natural and supernatural." What do we mean by these terms? By "natural" we simply mean the order which is familiar to us in our ordinary experience. Such a statement does not imply that we fathom its mystery or understand it. It simply asserts that it is something of which we have common experience and knowledge. We are never sur-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

prised by seeing the grass grow, nor the trees put forth their leaves in the spring, nor the sun rise or the stars shine. We say these things are perfectly "natural." By "supernatural" we mean the order that is above and beyond our ordinary experience. It is that which lies beyond our usual knowledge. Both the "natural" and the "supernatural" are equally mysterious in their ultimate nature and both are natural in the last analysis. We cannot run a line through the universe and say that all that lies on this side is natural and on that supernatural. These terms are figments of our finite minds. Everything is natural to God. Every event, all action, all life, all being owe their origin and source to God or else he is not God. His immanence argues for a natural world, and His transcendence for a supernatural realm. If God's life is not exhausted by the life of the world then some of His acts are beyond our ordinary experience, while if He is in and of His world, then much of His activity must be familiar to us. But do we not see that the two realms are essentially one and that the modern Christian has an idea of God which does not upset his scientific notions or contradict his belief in a law-abiding world? We need to remember also that "law" must not be exalted over much and set up as the explanation of anything. It is simply a statement of a generalization of our experience and observation. It is not an independent entity, it is not the cause of anything, and it is not personal. In



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

fact it argues for a person behind it. The modern man finds in His laws a revelation of God. They do not conceal but reveal the activity of the first great Cause. Only thus does the scientist or metaphysician avoid an endless chain of causes which would lead him back over an "infinite regress" rather than to a personal Creator. Only in terms of personality can we find a satisfactory statement of causality. Natural laws, therefore, are but the expression of God's method in ordering His world; they tell us of His changelessness but versatility, His stable, dependable character but His infinitely varied activity. God's actions are all "natural" to Him, they are not strange nor inconsistent to His consciousness. It is in this general field that we must find our justification for the banishment of many superstitions and perverted ideas of God and His relationship to His world.

What now can we say specifically about the miracle? We find that it rests definitely upon our conception of God, and His method of ordering His world. We believe that He is wise and consistent and we know from actual observation that He pursues a uniform, progressive and orderly method. When we remember the real meaning of such terms as natural, supernatural, and law, we must conclude that it excludes the traditional notion of miracle as a flagrant and open violation of natural law. If required to define a miracle from the modern point of view we would say that it is an event

## *Modern Christian Belief*

in the physical world or in human life which involves no violation or suspension of natural laws but which does transcend man's ordinary experience. It is therefore and thereby a supernatural occurrence originating in the will of the Creator, where all events and actions find their ultimate source, and is intended for the moral and spiritual benefit of man. This conclusion seems entirely consistent with a theistic point of view. If God is a free spirit, transcendent and infinite, if He has a loving purpose for His universe, must we not recognize the possibility of occurrences which lie beyond our ordinary experience? Man's freedom enables him to control natural forces. If there is a God, why is it unreasonable to suppose that He can, in His infinite freedom, control all life?

It is for just this truth, of course, that the commonly accepted notion of miracles contends—that God is the absolute Governor of His universe. The modern man finds this truth in the law and order of God's world, rather than in the abnormal and extraordinary event. In fact he cannot draw a hard and fast line through the events of life and thereby be compelled to lay God open to the charge of inconsistency. The modern attitude has resulted in the recognition of certain well established results. No one contends for the actual historicity of certain events recorded in the Old Testament such as the standing still of the sun, or the floating of an ax or the speaking of Balaam's ass.

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Many incidents such as the demon miracles, formerly recognized as miracles are now brought within the range of ordinary, that is natural, experience. Many other miraculous accounts can be explained by the growth of tradition and natural accretion around some actual fact as a basis. On the other hand, the rise of self-consciousness, of feeling, of conscience, the emergence of the human from the sub-human, the appearance of Jesus Christ, these are mighty facts which seem to comply with our suggested conception of a miracle. They represent no violation of natural law, they transcend experience, we believe they must have originated with God and are expressive of His eternal purpose of love. Let the reader remember, however, that his Christianity does not depend upon his miracles but upon his conception of God as Christ expressed it.

But the most vital question about our idea of God concerns His attitude to man. Here we might express the whole truth by simply saying it is Jesus' conception of the Father. But what a terrible mass of flagrant errors confront us. Even Jonathan Edwards asserted that "wicked men are useful in their destruction only." Doctrines of foreordination and predestination have taught that the great mass of mankind are doomed to eternal punishment. God's righteousness and holiness have been made the basis of His attitude to the children of wrath. Man is hopelessly and inevitably lost because of his sin and iniquity. In consequence most gigantic

## *Modern Christian Belief*

systems of machinery have been swung between heaven and earth in order to bridge the chasm. Something must be done to appease an angry God. Some sacrifice, some expiation, some satisfaction must be offered to an offended Dignitary or an infinite Judge or a moral Governor of the universe. In some way man's debt must be paid, God's wrath must be appeased, His warring attributes must be satisfied and the civil dissensions of His holy Being must be ended. All of these theories assume that God hates the sinner, that man is the object of His wrath and judgment, and that he is doomed to eternal punishment unless something is done.

Over against all of these assertions, we must place Jesus' idea which the modern man fully accepts. God does hate sin, but he loves the sinner. God is a holy, wise and loving Father who is only satisfied when His children come back to Him. The story of the prodigal son shows God's attitude to the child who has wandering into a far country and spent all of his substance in riotous living. When the son says, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants," he receives without any sacrifice for the father's satisfaction, a royal welcome to his home and his father's heart. Man only needs to leave the far country and go home to find his Father's love. God is only "satisfied in the persistent pursuit of men to save

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

them." His eternal passion is to find His children. The whole moral and spiritual universe is permeated and surcharged with a spirit which wins us back to God and righteousness and love. It is something like this which we mean when we speak of God's grace. It is His loving favor, His out-reaching passion which enables one to turn from sin and selfishness unto love and righteousness. Professor George Barker Stevens expressed this fundamental conception of God when he wrote: "I conclude that God was satisfied in the work of Christ in the sense of self-expression and self-satisfaction in sacrifice. God is satisfied in revealing His nature and in achieving in His world the ends of His wisdom and holy love. The notion of a satisfaction *ab extra*, and satisfaction of which He is the object is morally intolerable. God never needed to be atoned into love. God was satisfied in the work of Christ because it is the nature of the divine love to give, to serve, and to suffer with and for its objects." In place of an angry God, manifesting His wrath against vile sinners and demanding that His wrath be appeased, His affronted dignity satisfied and His offended holiness atoned for, we have a loving Father finding His satisfaction in a passionate search for His wandering children that He may save them to a filial life of love and service. Here then is our belief in God. What marked contrasts between this point of view and that of our fathers. God is not only above but in His world, manifesting His holy char-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

acter in a law-abiding dependable universe and as a Father revealing His eternal passion to save men from sin unto love.

### ABOUT CHRIST.

We have already expressed rather clearly what the modern Christian believes about Christ. We have seen that Jesus is the center and source of his Christian truth, and that in a life of vital union with Him, in an effort to live in the same filial relationship to God, and to exalt service and love as He did, is the surest path to Christian belief and certitude. At this juncture, therefore, it will be valuable simply to attempt to state what some of the present tendencies are and to see where the emphasis is being placed. When one thinks of the centuries of theological controversy which have raged about the person of Christ, how men have struggled for an understanding of His place and person in the Christian religion, how at times His deity has been exalted at the expense of His humanity and how at others His humanity has been asserted at the expense of His uniqueness, how now He has been ranged with God himself and again as the first of God's creatures, how Orthodoxy clung to His essential deity while Unitarianism established His essential humanity, then we may be grateful for the present emphasis in our thinking. We are not now concerned so much about the metaphysical interpretations of His person as we are to understand His life and teachings.



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

While the present tendency is distinctly practical rather than theological, yet as never before thinking and believing are centered in Christ. Modern religious thought has become Christocentric rather than theo-centric. We have already amply illustrated this statement in this book and particularly in this chapter. Our conception of man was shaped by Christ's teaching. He taught us that every man is potentially a son of God. Our idea of God in its deepest and most spiritual aspects came from Christ. He taught us that God is our Father and that he cares for us and plans to save us. In Chapter IX we endeavored to show that Christ's teachings, His life and His inner consciousness are the very genesis of our Christian beliefs, that Christ is Christianity itself, to use the phrase of Auguste Sabatier. In our effort, therefore, to express the belief of the modern Christian about Christ we shall not enter into the speculative or theological realm in a futile undertaking to solve the inscrutable mysteries of His person, but in accordance with the spirit and tendency of today we shall try, from a practical standpoint, to show what it is about Christ which claims the loyalty and devotion of countless persons throughout the world today.

The modern Christian believes that Christ was supremely practical. It is because of this quality that at first the modern man is attracted to Him and is willing to follow Him. This is the test to which every factor of life must submit. One of the accusations which is fre-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

quently lodged against American civilization is that it is not only intensely practical but too practical. Anything that is to persist in our life today is compelled to face this demand. Whether we speak of commercial, political, social, educational or religious activities the same statement holds true. Today, above all else, the modern man requires that everything offered for his acceptance must be judged by its practical usefulness in lessening the toil and tension of life. It must produce results which are satisfactory and appealing. However reasonable it may be, however æsthetic it may seem, however ingenious it may appear, the sole and ultimate test is, does it do what it professes to do, has it stood the actual test of every day activity and conflict. Even in philosophical circles this same spirit has manifested itself. Pragmatism, under the appealing and vigorous leadership of Professor William James in America, has arisen and in perfect harmony with the spirit of our age insisted that truth is that which "works." If then Christ is to meet this seemingly universal demand of our day, the first fact that must be established concerns the practical aspects of His teachings. Has Christianity worked?

The modern Christian believes intensely that it has and that it does. By actual experience he has found that Christianity satisfies his daily needs, and answers to the deepest yearnings of his spirit. Just why this is so must become evident not only in what we say for the purpose

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

of establishing our present point but also by all that is to follow in our effort to state what the modern man believes about Christ.

That Christ recognized deeply the practical needs of life is shown by His teachings about it. Christ placed a lofty value upon life. "For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" We only need to recall here what has been said about Christ's teaching concerning man to see the deep and abiding practical inspiration which He offers. Every man is priceless in the sight of God. He is God's child. He is to be judged not by what he is but by what he may become. No man has wandered so far but that he may return to a father's welcome. The only fatal sin is failure to sense sin, to make good evil and evil good. The only man who needs to be discouraged by his sin is the one who is not discouraged. Any man who hates his sin, who is struggling against it, may be sure of victory. A man is not measured by the number of times he has fallen but by his purpose and growing ability to rise from that fall. Man is God's child, tied inseparably to goodness and righteousness, unless he himself insists upon breaking the tie. Every man, even the hated publican and vile sinner, possesses infinite potentialities for recovery, growth and expansion. Anyone who thus emphasizes the inherent worth and dignity of every life has laid a firm foundation upon which he may build his demand for a life of practical

## *Modern Christian Belief*

usefulness, for he has placed at our disposal infinite sources of inspiration.

But Jesus does not pause here. He insists that the test of all life is its tireless activity and vital usefulness. "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father that is in heaven." Life then must be actual performance of duties and not empty professions. It must be fruitful, productive of useful results, and intensely practical whatever else it may be. It must be conceded that a vexed question arises from the fact that the teachings of Jesus contain portions which relate to the future, elements which the theologians call "eschatological," but however we may interpret His references to, and possible emphasis upon, the future life, we do not do His truth justice in any true sense until we recognize His clear and tireless insistence upon the necessity of present usefulness. No life, says Jesus, is rich which is not manifesting itself in active, brotherly service. The good Samaritan proved himself to be the real neighbor.

Moreover, these teachings of Jesus, the theoretic basis upon which must rest the contention that Christianity is a practical religion, find their actual counterpart in the history of the Christian centuries. They have shown, beyond all possible controversy, the practical utility of the Christian religion. Christianity

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

has worked. The conquest of the Roman Empire by a hated and despised sect of heretics, in a humble and far distant province, gradually pushing its way up from the lowest social stratum is an evidence of the practical virility of early Christianity. After centuries of development, when this religion found itself under the dominance of an ecclesiastical hierarchy and bound down by the shackles of religious despotism, it shook itself loose from its chains and again triumphantly proclaimed the supremacy of individual faith. During the last generation, confronted by marvelous developments in all fields of science and knowledge, it has boldly adopted the methods of modern research, freed itself from the useless accretions of the centuries, emerged with a clearer emphasis upon the fundamentals of ethics and religion, and virtually experienced a rebirth, attesting again the remarkable character of the teachings of Jesus and manifesting anew the supremely practical aspects of Christianity in its innate potentialities for adjustment to any environment. Above all, stand the marvelous triumphs of modern missions. When we think of the experiences of Turkey, China and Japan in the last decade, of the part the Christian missionary has played in these startling changes and of the recognized place of Christianity in these lands, then nothing more need be said in defense of the practical, dynamic influence of Christ's religion. Strong nations have been transformed, great civilizations have been



## *Modern Christian Belief*

metamorphosed, mighty empires have been developed! Surely the history of Christianity proclaims quietly but unmistakably the truth that Christianity has worked, that Jesus Christ is supremely practical.

Again the modern Christian believes that Christ was reasonable. When He has demonstrated to the world that His religion is practical, that it has met and is meeting the most severe test to which any religion can be subjected—that of contact with civilizations widely divergent and alien to one another in their fundamental concepts—then He has gained at least an entrance to the attention of most thinking persons. But some things seem to work for a time, even for centuries, without being true. If any religion is to master us permanently and claim us as loyal devotees it must be able to do more than stimulate our wills to practical action. There come moments of meditation when we examine fearlessly the very grounds of our faith. Such moments are the occasion of this volume. We must be able to believe that our spiritual satisfactions can stand the tests of reason. Otherwise they are useless for producing rich, abundant and deep life. They must satisfy our intellectual requirements. Can we maintain, therefore, that Christ offers us a religion which can meet the demands of our rational natures?

In answering this question we must begin by sweeping aside great masses of facts and large elements of thought which have marred the



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Christian centuries. In other words, if we are as reasonable as we demand that Christ shall be, we must not hold him responsible for the aberrations of Christianity or for the absurd errors and the ridiculous inconsistencies of many systems of theology. Jesus' demand for self-sacrifice did not justify the asceticism of the monastic movements. Dr. J. A. Broadus even asserts that "Jesus showed no tinge of asceticism." The Crusades, while expressive of loyalty to Jesus, were not logically an outgrowth of the spiritual requirements of the Master. Religious persecutions, ecclesiastical schisms, fratricidal wars, and bitter theological controversies are all obvious contradictions of the very essence of the teachings of Christ. He must not be held accountable for all the intolerable and revolting assertions of man-made theology. For example, to take an extreme instance, Christ uttered no invectives against new-born babes, pronouncing eternal damnation upon innocent children because by the parent's omission they had not been baptized. To test the rationality of Jesus we must go not only to history, not only to theology, but also to the life and words of Him who said "I am the truth."

When we follow this method, remembering always that Jesus purports to be not a scientist or philosopher but a moral and religious teacher of men, we find ourselves in the presence of supreme rationality. This statement, if defended fully, would require more space than is

## *Modern Christian Belief*

at our disposal, but we can endeavor to sustain it at two cardinal points—namely, as supported by His own methods and standards of life and as expressed in His requirements of those who would follow Him. The world has not transcended and seemingly cannot surpass the truth expressed in His life and teachings. Every act and every utterance is expressive of, and perfectly consistent with, His intense loyalty to His Father and the Kingdom. At the very beginning of his public career, for nearly six weeks, he struggled with suggestions subversive of His high ideals and emerged with unshaken loyalty to His spiritual mission. Later in His career when the forces of opposition were growing steadily stronger and closing in upon Him, when it was apparent that the inevitable conclusion of the conflict would be His own death, even then “He steadfastly set his face to go up to Jerusalem.” His passion, His trial, His death upon the cross, which was but the final and complete consummation of His life of sacrifice, all point to the same dominant motive and ideal for His life. Whatever may be one’s interpretation of Christ’s person, he does not question that His life was consistent and logical beyond that of all other spiritual teachers. The details of the Gospels contribute to a general portrait of One who has realized in His own living the ideals which He taught.

But the severer test comes when we ask what Jesus expects of a man today. Ethical writers have discussed all the possible ideals for the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

individual but none have ever successfully and permanently cast doubt upon the standards raised by Christ. He expects every man to become worthy of his heritage as a child of the Heavenly Father, to realize the splendid possibilities of his soul, and to hold himself responsible for the full utilization of the talents with which God has endowed him. He calls each person to realize himself, to become as large and useful and noble as God intended him to be. He expects that this can be done only by enabling every other person to do likewise. Make the most of yourself by making the most of every other self—this is the whole demand of Jesus. Self-realization through self-sacrifice is the expression of the same truth in technical terms. Such a requirement not only appeals to one's reason, it grips his entire being. It says Jesus is not only practical, He is supremely reasonable.

Furthermore, the modern Christian believes that Christ gave the right place to love. There is a deeper stratum in human personality than either will or reason. In the full vigor of life, amid the stress and strain of existence, we are prone to emphasize our insistence upon the practical aspects of every element that enters into our complex lives. Likewise in times of thoughtful examination of the fundamentals of a religion we are peculiarly liable to demand above all else those qualities which will satisfy the requirements of our rational natures. Both of these qualifications we have seen are

## *Modern Christian Belief*

possessed by Jesus. But man is more than action or reason. Moments come inevitably to every person when something deeper is needed. Man has a heart. Unless Christ appeals to the affectional as well as the rational elements of life he cannot satisfy the spiritual needs of this or any generation. Does Christ supply our wants expressed so persistently by the heart?

The modern Christian believes that he does. In reality here is the grandeur of Jesus. It could not be so, if he did not satisfy our reason. But Jesus transcends intellectual standards. He comes to us and seeks entrance not only to the mind but to the innermost recesses of the human spirit. Love is the summary of His message and His mission. In the Sermon on the Mount He says: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, *Love your enemies*, and pray for them that persecute you." The man who has tried this test of loving his enemies knows how basal is this exaltation of the spirit of love. Continuing His discourse and citing the Father as the proof of His insistence upon the supremacy of love, He calls men to the noblest and loftiest of all ideals. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Perfect, not in wisdom or power, but in *love*, perfect in the sense that our hearts are possessed of a spirit at once kind and forgiving, a spirit which breathes the very atmosphere of thoughtfulness, generosity and helpfulness. His summary of the law cen-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

tered about love. "Love God, love your neighbor"—this was for Jesus the whole duty of man. Everything must be stated in terms of love.

But Jesus did not express his thought only in these abstract statements. Over against these teachings he threw the light of concrete parables. Whose heart, whose whole affectional nature, is not won as he reads the parable of the Good Samaritan or of the Prodigal Son? How those stories throb with the power of love! How one instinctively feels welling up within his soul the spontaneous assurance that this is a true expression of life's duty. Men's hearts in all the Christian centuries have been thrilled by the passionate appeal of love in these matchless parables.

Christ's emphasis on love penetrates still deeper. Not only by formal laws and concrete stories did Jesus teach that love is life's best gift, but by its application to the sorrowing, burdened hearts of men. Christ's specific sayings of comfort have been the satisfaction of numberless souls. With calm assurance and quiet confidence Jesus uttered his beautiful messages of hope and cheer. The writer of the Fourth Gospel has preserved their spirit for us. "In the world ye have tribulation but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." Or again we find it expressed in that greatest verse of the New Tes-



## *Modern Christian Belief*

tament: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Such words as these are the secret of Christ's mastery of human hearts. *He enthrones love.* He teaches us that life is reasonable, but above all that it is loving. He tells us that reason justly demands satisfaction but that love is supremely rational. He asks us to believe that life is rich and true in proportion as its center, its source and its propelling power is the great indefinable factor of all life, human or divine, the factor which the inner experience of every person attests, the factor which never faileth—*love.*

But now we reach the crux of our problem about Christ. It is the question which from the beginning has perplexed Christian thinkers and occasioned innumerable theological discussions and controversies. Beneath the will and reason and heart we find a still deeper stratum in man's nature. After all, the old faculty psychology is gone. Man is not composed of three separate, water-tight compartments. Above all of these, including them and transcending them is man's personality which is a unity. To be sure, on the surface of life he wants action. He demands practicability. In moments of meditation, he struggles with the insistent and cogent requirements of a logical mind. In times of trouble and sorrow, the human heart craves satisfaction and comfort. In hours of grief, the human spirit, conscious



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

of the awful isolation of individual existence, yearning for companionship and fellowship, craves for the blessings of love and affection. All of these hungerings of the human spirit we find supplied by the riches which are in Christ Jesus.

But man struggles with a still deeper longing. He is in a world which, as life deepens, assumes new and startling aspects. His soul is stirred by the revelations of the various sciences. He peers into his microscope and finds life infinitesimal. He gazes through his telescope at the stars above and loses himself in the infinitude of space. The great abyss yawns before him and the little powers of his imagination utterly fail as he tries to comprehend the stars and universes thousands of light-miles away. Yonder he is told is a star from which the light started before Plato was born and has not reached us. He observes marvellous manifestations of power all about him. He beholds the striking order of the universe. Here and there he recognizes curious indications of purposeful adaptations. Now he meditates upon the strange and vitally significant parallel between his own mind and the knowable qualities of his outer world. Inevitably he yearns to know the explanation, the meaning, the interpretation of this great arena upon which his life is enacted. He asks what must lie back of all this marvellous life. What is its source, its ground, its cause? Can there be a God?

## *Modern Christian Belief*

"O somewhere, somewhere, God unknown  
Exist and be.  
I am dying, I am all alone,  
I must have thee."

The pitiable gropings of mankind after God, the messages of the religions of the nations, the history of developing ethical and religious life, all assert that man's deepest yearnings center in the God problem. Solve this and everything is clear. Sooner or later for every serious-minded, thinking person this perplexing question emerges. It may come with some great sorrow, or in the midst of the work of daily life or as one lingers in meditation among the great works of nature, but so surely as he lives some day he will find himself face to face with the mightiest of all human problems. Now the supreme question is this: Does Christ enter into this innermost chamber of the soul and speak any message of satisfaction?

One feels instinctively both the cogency and the barrenness of cold theistic thought. So long as man lives, he will reason. So long as problems exist, the spirit of speculation will continue. But human yearnings are not always satisfied with arid speculation. Certain types of minds will always demand something beyond the products of cold intellectualism. Anything that is to persist and be of value to mankind must be stated so that it can touch the mind of the average man. To persist, a thing must appeal to the people. It is somewhere in this

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

region that we learn why God expressed Himself in a human personality.

Into this dark valley, Jesus comes with all the light of His radiant life. We are not concerned now with metaphysical interpretations of the person of Jesus. To follow that tangent would be to leave the circle within which we are to find the center of our problem. Moreover, such a procedure has lost its appeal and, for our generation, largely outlived its usefulness. Jesus lived His life and then said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." What can this mean? For the modern Christian it means that *Jesus Christ was all that God could be in human terms*. This in turn means specifically and precisely this. In His bitter condemnation of sin, in His powerful invectives hurled against Scribes and Pharisees, in His utter repudiation of insincerity, hypocrisy, deceit and guile, in His tireless opposition to externality and mechanical religiosity, in His unceasing denunciation of all hatred, malice and selfishness, Jesus has helped us to get an idea of God. In His exaltation of reality and genuineness, in His insistence upon inner spiritual reality, in His demand for self-sacrifice and service, in His constant emphasis upon righteousness and love, Jesus has helped us to get an idea of God. In His infinite patience with disciples slow of heart, in His divine forgiveness for a friend who had denied Him or for a woman taken in adultery, in His sacrifice of rest and energy and life for the needy multi-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

tudes, in His fathomless love for the sinner, in His awful passion and suffering upon the cross, Jesus has helped us to get an idea of God.

Jesus comes into our deepest moments of meditation, and into our hours of spiritual cravings for the understanding of life in its fulness and says that there is a God, who has manifested Himself in this world, and in us, His sons. He tells us that He condemns sin, that He loves righteousness and that He suffers because we sin. He teaches us that God is love.

Jesus was all that God could be in human terms and He was all that man could be in His upward reach toward God. He represented God to man and man to God. He was both prophet and priest. In the true sense of the term, a prophet is one who speaks forth, who discloses, who reveals. Jesus showed God to man in a new and unique sense. He tells us what God is, what man may become and what is their ideal, filial relationship. He is our prophet. A priest represents man to God. Such is his function and his significance. In Christ, God sees the richness and depth and abundance of human life. He becomes our King, not only because He was Lord of His own inner realm, but because He offers in life, in teachings, in character, in personality that which satisfies the thirstings of our spirits. Jesus Christ is the Prophet, Priest and King of our lives, but in new, vital and real meanings.

The modern Christian then believes that

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Christ was practical, reasonable, loving and divine in the sense in which we have endeavored to present them here. In conclusion it should be observed that these beliefs cover the whole of life. Nothing remains which Christ does not satisfy. It is necessary for the individual to take what Christ offers. His riches await our appropriation. We can never comprehend them in their fulness. Finite life can never be all action, finite rationality cannot fathom infinite wisdom, finite love cannot be perfect, the infinite God cannot be fully comprehended, but we may struggle each day a little nearer to Christ and thus find in his unsearchable, inexhaustible, unattainable gifts, the only worthy and permanently inspiring spiritual ideal of life. We do not need to ask how Christ saves us. He has already done all that human or divine power can do. We only need to take His gifts, assimilate His truth, live in vital union with Him and the result is assured. Salvation is simply making a bad man into a good one. It is turning from sin to righteousness, from selfishness to love. It is going home from the far country to the Father.

## CHAPTER XI

### WHY THE MODERN CHRISTIAN BELIEVES

FROM some points of view we have already given the reasons why the modern Christian believes as he does. In the statement of our intellectual attitude, in our recognition that the mind must both be free to search for truth and be submissive to the great external standard of reality, in our presentation of the sources of Christian truth and in our formulation of modern beliefs about man, God and Christ we have expressed much which shows why the modern man accepts Christianity. Nevertheless, back of these considerations there lie great abiding convictions which help to account for his belief and to give stability to his faith. It is for the purpose of presenting these reasons and convictions that this chapter is written. It is hoped that it will ground our belief in certain fundamental and eternal facts away from which it will be practically impossible for us to escape. The beliefs themselves are their own commendation. They must make their own argument and establish their own case. In fact, so far as it is possible with belief they



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

should be self-evidencing and axiomatic. And it is just this quality which makes love, service, goodness, beauty and character so compelling. But still it is helpful and assuring to realize that these beliefs tie into other great certainties which strengthen and anchor the whole structure. Therefore, with a summary before us of the content of the modern Christian's belief, let us ask what its grounds are. Why does he accept these beliefs?

We have scriptural justification for such an effort in words which help us also to appreciate at the beginning the nature of our task and the spirit in which we should undertake it. "Be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear." Such an exhortation suggests that we are naturally expected to be ready to give a reason for our faith. We are not blind followers of a mysterious, occult philosophy but we are sharers of an inspiring, reasonable religion. Nevertheless, we are not dealing with a fixed system of knowledge but with "the hope," the belief, which satisfies our spiritual natures. It is not logical certainty but simply and purely a total attitude to life and duty and God which defies, without contradicting, logic, which is rational because it transcends pure reason. It is therefore with the spirit of meekness and open-mindedness that the Christian must approach such a task. By the nature of the problem a method of "rigor and vigor" is excluded. Dog-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

matism must vanish. We must realize fully that we cannot compress into the rigid form of words all of the reasons, intimations, feelings, intuitions and hopes which combine to produce man's final acceptance of his religious faith. Yet we must have our reasons. What are they in essence?

In the first place, the modern Christian believes in his religion because he accepts the reality of the spiritual world. It is because of this conviction that he has ranged himself on the side of religion. This interpretation of the world lies at the very center of our whole problem. To some it presents a more definite appeal than it does to others. To the man of a philosophical temperament, no further step can be taken until this question is answered and, when it is answered, then he has a clear path to his religious faith. It involves a distinctly speculative approach to our whole life problem. It observes that there are two fundamental ways of interpreting the universe. One point of view is called materialism and the other idealism—the former finds its reality in matter and the latter in spirit. Materialism has manifested itself in the widest variety of forms but its essence lies in assuming that the world is just what it seems to be upon the surface—a material universe operated as a mechanism. To the materialist the things which he can touch and see and handle are the only realities. On the other hand, idealism, while expressing itself in the most varied ways, insists upon the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

presence of spirit, or mind, or reason in the universe. It believes that nothing can be explained upon the materialistic basis, in fact that materialistic philosophizing is a self-contradictory process. Logical materialism excludes personality, banishes thought, denies the existence of God and makes thinking a farce. To the idealist, the things of sense are unstable and unreal. Goodness, love and truth are to him far more real and abiding than the things he touches and sees. He believes that life finds its reality in the things of the spirit. He maintains that external things owe whatever reality they possess to the mind and soul which they express. To him a great symphony has more reality than a skyscraper. To him a mother's love is more eternal than granite pillars. To him the remorse of sin is more stern than physical disease. A great painting possesses reality for the idealist not because it is made of canvas and pigment but because it expresses the thought and feeling of the artist. A beautiful statue is not marble, it is the soul of the man who used his chisel to produce it. Whatever reality the symphony or the painting or the statue possesses comes not from paper and ink, or canvas and paint, or marble and lines but from the ideas, the spirit, the feeling, the soul which they possess. Now the idealist looks upon life and the world in precisely the same way. It is the expression of thought. Back of all its seeming outward reality is its inner spiritual cause. Man is a spirit rather

## *Modern Christian Belief*

than a body and the universe is an infinite Creator rather than stars and worlds. Such a point of view has been supported by the best philosophers from Plato onward. To him the real world was the world of ideas. Not in the instability, unreality and negativity of the things of sense, but in the permanence, fixity and stability of the world of ideas do we find reality. The Apostle Paul gave expression to this truth when he wrote to the Corinthians that "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Moreover Christ stands as the very embodiment of these ideas. Now if we ask why the modern Christian believes we must find one great, all-inclusive answer in the fact that he is an idealist, that with the best thought of our day he accepts a spiritual interpretation of life and the world and that he not only finds Christ's teaching in accord with such a philosophy but filling it completely with deep spiritual content.

In the second place, the modern Christian believes in his religion because of the message of history. Facts are facts. As he studies the life of mankind he sees that one of its most constant, if widely varied, elements has been religion. All ages, and all peoples have had their religion. It is very important here not to be deceived by a subtle fallacy. Just because many religions have been the embodiment and protection of ignorance and superstition is no more argument against religion than man's pre-moral state is an argument against human-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

ity. Both must be studied from the evolutionary point of view. It is not what they have been but what they are becoming that should determine our conclusion. The presence of any religion in man's primitive life is his glory. Or because ethical standards have varied, because one tribe taught its members to steal as an enviable virtue and other peoples have condemned it as a crime does not discredit the basal distinction between right and wrong which lies back of both standards. Religion has been one of the most powerful and significant influences in every civilization. The intellectual formulations of it may be untenable and erroneous but the fact of its vital place in man's experience cannot be doubted. Man has always felt the need of a religion. In our next and final chapter when we come to a consideration of the very practical issue of education and religion we shall see that religion is inevitably a permanent element in life. Its present form may not abide, but religion, man's life lived in its relationships, is absolutely inseparable from life itself. It is of value to observe here that modern thought sustains this contention with unqualified emphasis. For example, John Fiske said: "The lesson of evolution is that through all these weary ages the human soul has not been cherishing in religion a delusive phantom; but, in spite of seemingly endless groping and stumbling, it has been rising to the recognition of its essential kinship with the ever-living God. Of all the implications of the doctrine of evolu-



## *Modern Christian Belief*

tion with regard to man, I believe the very deepest and strongest to be that which asserts the everlasting reality of religion." Now the modern man recognizes these facts, he sees that religion has been an essential element in human existence and that he, along with all his fellow beings, must have something which meets the same needs whether or not he applies the term religion to it.

In the third place, the modern Christian believes in his religion because of certain stern facts in his own life. He finds in his own experience why mankind has had its religions. These facts need no detailed statement nor discussion. They are incontrovertible and they thrust themselves upon us every day and hour that we live. The appeal of goodness is omnipresent. Every choice presents to us a lower and a higher good. Life consists in being able to choose the best in the presence of the good or even the better. Every honest man is incessantly confronted by the distinction between right and wrong. It is absolutely basal and fundamental. Moreover it is presented to us in a very concrete form. The voice of conscience cannot be silenced. At every turn it arises and says—"You ought to do this." If the good is rejected, if conscience is neglected then a sense of guilt arises to harass and trouble us and to drive us back to our true place. For our minds, struggling with the deep things of the spirit, we are constantly craving some intellectual satisfaction, for our hearts suffering



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

under sorrow and shrouded in darkness, we are seeking the sources of abiding comfort and peace, for our wills, struggling with all the eternal issues of moral conflict and compelled to face the duties and obligations of life we must have permanent moral and spiritual inspiration. Religion helps one to face all these facts and it seeks to satisfy these needs. We have seen that the actual answers to these questions are found in the teachings and life of Jesus.

In the fourth place, the modern Christian believes in his religion because of the facts of Christ's life. We have begun in this chapter by showing that the modern man finds support for his religious belief in the conviction that an idealistic interpretation of the universe is the only satisfactory one. He believes in the reality of the spiritual world. Such a confidence gives added force to his belief in God and sets his face toward a religious conception of life. Again with a scientific point of view he cannot disregard the facts of history which point unmistakably to religion as a permanent factor of human existence. Furthermore within himself, he finds evidence of the same needs which men in all generations have felt. All of these considerations produce a cumulative effect which sustains unquestionably his confidence in religion. Now it only remains to see why he has selected Christ as his religious teacher. Here we might undertake a consideration of all the great world religions such as Mohamme-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

danism, Buddhism and Confucianism. We might enter the whole field of comparative religion, establish our tests or principles and endeavor to decide between Christ, Socrates, Buddha and Mahomet. To be strictly logical and to make our assertions have the appearance of universality this should be our method. But such an effort lies entirely beyond our limitations. We can, however, go into the Christian field and ask just why Christ commends Himself to the modern man who is searching for a religion. In our last chapter, in dealing with Christ, we presented material which answers this question and it need not be repeated here. It will be of value at this point, however, to see wherein Christ's teaching marked a distinctly new epoch in religion and wherein He superceded the religious ideas of his day.

The modern Christian accepts the beliefs about Christ already presented because Christ substituted a true for a false conception of man. The Jewish idea of man which Jesus met was not intended to inspire human hearts. Childhood was not always honored. Even His own disciples rebuked parents for their presumption in venturing to bring children to a spiritual teacher. While the Jews as a nation conceived themselves to be God's children, the Gentile was despised. Love for the Jew and hatred for the Gentile was the principle which summarized their idea of man. It based distinctions between men upon false and mechanical

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

standards rather than upon worth and character. It meant hopelessness and discouragement for the great mass of the people.

Over against this conception Jesus placed His new, universal, inspiring doctrine that every man is a son of God. He exalted childhood. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not" was his rebuke to the disciples. Childlikeness, indeed, he made the test of the righteous man. "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." Regardless of race or social distinctions, Jesus recognized rich possibilities in the very humblest of men. He insisted that there never could be any basal lines of separation between true and worthy children of our Father. The oneness of mankind, the solidarity of the race, the universality of brotherhood, are all grounded in a Father's love. If we want to know Jesus' conception of man we only need to picture Him in our imagination as He went about among friends and enemies relieving pain, teaching the ignorant, combating the oppressor, opposing sin and comforting the bereaved. His daily life proclaims His confidence in the supreme worth of every man. Such a point of view quickens our hope. It calls us to divine sonship. It awakens our consciousness of inherent dignity. It calls the hopeless and discouraged to look up, and in the midst of seeming defeat and failure to trust their Father. Moreover it bids us to recognize these same elements in every man, to ac-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

cord to others what we claim for ourselves, to strive to awaken in every person a sense of his highest possibilities and to give to him the opportunity to realize those potentialities. In short, Christ in replacing the false Jewish conceptions of man requires us to replace present smallness with promised largeness, to banish heartless separation with sympathetic union, to conquer blighting discouragement with abiding hope. It becomes perfectly plain why the modern Christian believes in Christ. It is because Christ believes in him.

Likewise Christ substituted a true for a false conception of the world. Here again the Jews had evolved a conception which robbed man of hope and peace. The world, the Jews thought, was in the temporary rule and possession of the evil one. This idea is not strange, for the Jew had suffered from many bitter experiences. The terrible exile with all its shattering of religious ideals, the Maccabean struggles, the internal dissensions and contentions of warring parties, the entering of the Romans, all of these and many other hardships had combined to force upon him the feeling that God was not in command of his earth. The book of Daniel, for example, endeavors to account for this condition by the theory that Jehovah has committed this world to the rule of the four great kingdoms. In the New Testament the thought of Satan's rulership in this world comes to frequent and complete expression. In the temptation of Jesus, Satan is pictured as making the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

proud boast that all the kingdoms of this world are at his disposal. Frequent allusions to the "prince of this world" confirm this interpretation. The correlate of this idea of Satan's rulership is that God is separate from his world. It is essentially evil. Its nature is such that the Kingdom of Heaven can come only by a violent and radical overthrow of the present order. It is not surprising that these ideas were the source of a bitter pessimism which could find no good thing in this world and looked upon it as a permanent hindrance to true life.

In distinct contrast to this, Jesus teaches us that this is God's world. Without minimizing the awfulness of evil, He insists, with sane confidence, that God rules His world and that evil will be conquered. The world is indeed an expression of God. The growing wheat, the mustard seed, the tree, the lily, all nature, contributed its lessons to Jesus' heart. The real message of Christ is that the Kingdom of God is at hand, it is here, it is among us. The world, He teaches, is a good place to live in. Such a conception of the arena upon which our life is to be enacted is full of hope and inspiration. It requires us to live with the assurance that God controls his world and that he is present in it caring for his children. It demands of us that we should help toward the realization of the Kingdom of God, of His rule in the hearts of men. It tells us that though the Kingdom may be *there* in the future that it is also *here*



## *Modern Christian Belief*

and now. It exalts the world as God's possession and as a place offering here and now unlimited opportunities for growth and usefulness. Again it becomes obvious why the modern world believes in Christ. It is because Christ believes in the world.

Furthermore Christ substituted a true for a false conception of religion. By religion we mean our life lived in relation to God's life. It is friendship with the Father. As Pascal said "Piety is God sensible to the heart." The significant feature in any religion concerns the relationship which is supposed to exist between man and God. To the Jews, righteousness was keeping the law. Sin was violation of the law. The relationship between God and man required some external means, some bridge by which the chasm could be crossed. Religion was nationalistic and separative. Life was external and mechanical. Any adequate obedience to the law lay entirely beyond the possible for the the average Jew. Hopelessness and despair emerge where men were seeking for inspiration and courage. Religion, the giver of life, became a source of spiritual death.

Again, Christ completely transforms this interpretation of religion. Insisting that this is God's world and that man is God's child, He makes religion a matter solely of personal, filial relationships. A vexing problem of philosophers in all ages has been the relationship of the finite creature and the Infinite Creator, but that Jesus has here placed the entire



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

question in the right field there can be no doubt. He insists that the relationship is immediate and personal. Righteousness is love. Sin is selfishness, which is lovelessness. It is against God. Religion, the relation of man's and God's life is universal. All external barriers are obliterated. No organization, no person stands between man and God. Every man by living the life of service and love comes into the right relationship to his God. In other words, he finds his religion. Here is the truest answer to the deepest yearnings of the human spirit. A religion which makes God the sole Ruler of the universe, who has come to expression in the world and in ourselves, and to whom we may stand in direct personal relationship, this is sufficient for every need of the human spirit. Christ calls us to share its blessings by a life of inner righteousness and love. Again it becomes clear why the modern Christian believes in Christ. It is because Christ's religion puts man into intimate personal relationship with God.

Finally Christ substituted a true for a false conception of death. To all mankind, death has been the mystery of mysteries. In this single word is wrapped up the deepest of earth's woes and sorrows. It is not only the Jews' but the world's conception that confronts us here. With Jesus' entrance into human life we come upon a distinctly new epoch, not only in morals and religion in general, but in the interpretation of this enigma of life in partic-

## *Modern Christian Belief*

ular. *Jesus finds in death the meaning of life.* He insists that we must "die to live." "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it." "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit." Here appears the significant aspect of Jesus' death. "The path of death is the path of life." His death became a necessity for His life. By his death Jesus gave life to His religion. To Jesus, death was the portal to full life, the entrance to larger spheres of activity, the transition from partial to full life. Christ asks us to let death cast its light over the meaning of life. He tells us that dying is living. He would have us know that dying to self, that self-sacrifice, that service constitute the only direct path to true life.

And concerning physical death itself whose reality we can never question, Christ would have us think in an eternal, timeless way. We must regard death not as a transforming crisis, not as the end of a path, not as a transition to a state of fixity and stagnation but rather as a liberating evolution to a larger life, as the real dawn of a career, as the entrance to an existence full of possibilities for growth, for service and for love.

In some way we can find in Christ the confirmation of our silent intimations of life's hidden depths. He makes us feel that there is meaning in all our unrealized hopes and

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

aspirations, in our eternal sense of justice, in our abiding conviction that man, the crowning product of endless cycles of toiling life, cannot be extinguished, and in our firm confidence that life is not a stupendous phantom. Christ confidently assures us that all our unexpressed, unformulated and unbidden premonitions and inner hungerings of the human spirit proclaim the supreme message that man lives eternally. With Christ we know the conquest of man's arch enemy. Death is swallowed up in victory. We can exclaim "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We learn in Christ, to use a phrase of Edward Caird, that "true life is the *death of death*." We begin to understand how Tennyson could sing:

"The face of death is toward the Sun of Life,  
His shadow darkens earth; his truer name  
Is 'onward,'"

Again it becomes evident why the modern Christian believes in Christ. By his death Christ found life for his religion and for us, his followers. He accomplishes for us the death of death.

We have now endeavored to set forth the reasons which lead the modern man not only to recognize the necessity of religion as a permanent essential factor of life but also to believe that Jesus offers the fundamentals of a true religion. We have tested this statement at four most vital points. We have seen that Jesus

## *Modern Christian Belief*

established a new epoch in religion by banishing the false ideas and enunciating the true conceptions regarding man, the world, religion and death. These, in connection with our statement of the content of modern Christian belief in Chapter X must suffice as illustrations of the grounds of Christian belief.

Our constructive statements are now before the reader. Perhaps it will increase their cumulative strength if even at this point we turn directly about, and endeavor to see just what the alternative is for one who rejects the Christian solution of the problem of religion. It must be conceded frankly that such a person can point to many perplexing objections. He can insist that many unanswered problems remain, that, for example, we have said nothing about prayer, or the trinity, or the holy spirit, or the atonement, or the incarnation, or the final judgment. Perhaps, however, the intellectual attitude advocated in these pages will enable the reader to understand clearly the right point of view on these subjects. In any case it is the duty of the true teacher not to settle all questions but to open them. Again this objector may honestly interpose that there is so much mystery and uncertainty that he must let it all go. Or he may seriously argue that he has no method of knowing whether the liberal is not just as mistaken as the conservative. Such objections the writer hopes have been fully anticipated and answered. But even so we must admit that vital objections do remain. Shall

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

this man then reject Christianity? In accordance with the ideal set up in this book that is precisely his prerogative if thus he finds the greatest truth and the most satisfying intellectual freedom. But let him face the alternative with perfect candor and utter frankness. To reject Christianity or religion in general settles nothing. He has solved no problem by refusing to accept one explanation which is offered for it. To set aside Christianity only turns over a new page which is perfectly blank. The answer to the religious problem must still be written upon that page. To suggest "atheism" as an answer is to end in blank nothingness. It solves the problem by abolishing it. But what is he to do with history? What is he to make of conscience, obligation, and a sense of guilt? Where is his mind to find its answer, his will its inspiration and his heart its comfort? How is he to explain the universe, himself, evil and countless other irrepressible issues which crowd upon the honest, serious thinker of to-day? He may scoff at religion, he may reject the term but he cannot reject his relationships. It is not a question of terms but of stern unalterable conditions which must be met. To reject the solution to these problems offered by Jesus throws before one a terrible alternative. John Fiske in his book *The Destiny of Man* formulates the issue clearly when he writes: "From the first dawning of life we see all things working together toward one mighty goal, the evolution of the most exalted spiritual qualities which



## *Modern Christian Belief*

characterize Humanity. The body is cast aside and returns to the dust of which it was made. The earth, so marvelously wrought to man's uses, will also be cast aside. The day is to come, no doubt, when the heavens shall vanish as a scroll, and the elements be melted with fervent heat. So small is the value which Nature sets upon the perishable forms of matter! The question then is reduced to this: Are man's highest spiritual qualities, into the production of which all this creative energy has gone, to disappear with the rest? . . . The more thoroughly we comprehend that process of evolution by which things have come to be what they are, the more we are likely to feel that to deny the everlasting persistence of the spiritual element in Man is to rob the whole process of its meaning. It goes far toward putting us to permanent intellectual confusion, and I do not see that any one has yet alleged, or is likely to allege, a sufficient reason for accepting so dire an alternative." Man's spiritual qualities are to persist and man's need of a religion is permanent. Let him who rejects religion face honestly and fairly in his search for the truth, the alternative which confronts him when he turns from Christianity. As he follows this method, he will turn back again to religion and Christ with a deeper appreciation of their contribution to the richness and satisfaction of life.

There remains just this final word which unifies and links together all these pages. One



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

fundamental reason why the modern Christian believes in his religion is just because Christianity offers him the freedom of the truth. It is not a religion of authority but a religion of the spirit. It calls a man to a frank, open, candid search for the truth about life and the world. Jesus Christ summons His followers to a life of independence and fellowship. As Auguste Sabatier has expressed it: "The authority of Jesus is the authority of the things that He teaches, the divine work which He carries on in the hearts of men. It is the authority of his person, if we will, so far as his person is the incarnation of his gospel, and as both are clothed with the ascendancy of holiness and the conquering charm of love." So, in the last analysis, if we ask for the reason why a modern man believes in Christ we shall find the answer in the fact that Christianity is in perfect accord with the intellectual attitude of our day, that it fosters and develops it and thus avoids any conflict with a changing thought world. Back of all the content of the modern Christian's belief lies the stable, permanent grounds of his confidence which we have tried to express in this chapter. They make his Christian faith stronger and richer. They transform beliefs and hopes into convictions and moral certainties. They unify, systematize and strengthen his entire thought world and deepen, enrich, and purify his religious faith.

## CHAPTER XII

### EDUCATION AND RELIGION

**I**N this concluding chapter we wish to face as honestly and fearlessly the very practical issue which grows out of our field as we have the intellectual problems which it has involved. There can be no doubt that our subject vitally concerns the interests both of education and religion. Our thought therefore must include some recognition of this question which lies so close to two great elements of our civilization represented by many ancient and dignified institutions and organizations.

Historically, we find adequate recognition of the inner relationship which naturally exists between education and religion. It was the Church, by means of its monasteries, which kept alive the smoldering fires of knowledge during the mediæval centuries. In America, many of our great colleges and universities, until the advent of the state institutions, were founded and nurtured by representatives of the Church. In fact we can only adequately describe the early period of American education by the adjective "ecclesiastical." Our first colleges were practically divinity schools and their graduates were chiefly clergymen.

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

At the present moment, also, the whole question of the proper relationship of these two great factors of American life is being widely discussed not only by educators and churchmen, but by parents and the public at large. As a nation, by insisting upon the complete separation of Church and State, we have fortunately avoided the very serious problems which confront England, Germany and France. But this fundamental principle has not fully solved the question. Numerous efforts to describe the religion of the future, scholarly treatments of the "function of religion in man's struggle for existence," innumerable magazine articles which have carried the whole subject out of academic circles over into the arena of popular thought, together with many public utterances by representative men of various professions, combine to contribute a most distinct timeliness to the discussion of the relationship of education and religion.

### THE TERMS DEFINED.

The subject of this chapter, however, is so general in its character that we must be correspondingly definite in its statement if we are to reach any tenable conclusions. Each term taken separately is as broad as life itself. The complexity of the relationships involved are sometimes hopelessly confusing. It becomes important, therefore, that we should seek to put positive and definite content into our terms.

In defining "education" we are not attempt-

## *Education and Religion*

ing to add one more conception to the long list of cogent statements that have come to us from our leading educators. Each one has contributed its element of truth to our changing ideas. But what we do aim to do is to point out a very distinct phase of all these definitions. It marks a clear change in emphasis and is almost universally recognized. This characteristic aspect becomes apparent the moment we consider some of the definitions of education. President Emeritus Eliot's address entitled "Education for Efficiency" suggests it at once. President Maclaurin formulated it clearly when he said that "the end of education is to fit men to deal with the affairs of life honestly, intelligently and efficiently." Stated in different terms, this current emphasis on the social aspect of education is adequately expressed by Abraham Flexner when he says, "education is no longer a formal discipline, but rather a concrete device to facilitate the assertion of individual capacity in terms of rational activity. This is the serious significance of the extended scope of the American college and of the elective system, this is the meaning of libraries, laboratories, and museums constantly multiplying and enlarging." President Thwing, in his volume on "College Administration" has stated tersely his conception in these words; "The higher education, as well as the lower, is to be organized about the unit of the individual student. To equip him for life is the supreme purpose." Similarly President Garfield of Williams Col-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

lege has given positive content to his idea of education by saying: "Hence I venture to assert that the chief end of the American college is to train citizens for citizenship." Professor E. P. Cubberly in his concise and clear book on "Changing Conceptions of Education" has wisely said that "the school must grasp the significance of its social connections and relations and must come to realize that its real worth and its hope of adequate reward lies in its social efficiency." These citations are quite sufficient to establish the statement that modern conceptions of education clearly recognize its objective aspect. The emphasis is no longer inner but outer. The important thing is not methods but men and women. Education must produce efficiency, it must relate a person to his work, to his country and to the world. Education is true and vital only in proportion as it recognizes fully all of the ties of life. Remembering that personality is social, we may say that by education we mean all of the processes, within and without our institutions of learning, by which personality is developed. To be educated is to become more and more intimately related to the life of the nation and of the world. Education, therefore, is growing relationships. This common objective aspect of all modern conceptions of education is most striking and significant.

In attempting to define religion it will be particularly advantageous if we can fully rid our minds of what religion is not. By religion

## *Education and Religion*

we do not mean ecclesiasticism. We are not attempting to discuss the church as such nor any of its varied forms. The church, the synagogue, the ethical culture society, and all kindred organizations are only partial and changing external expressions of the inner reality with which we deal. Let us never fully identify the varied, imperfect, external manifestations with the inner spiritual fact. Again, let it be clearly remembered that by religion we do not mean theology. Theology is but the intellectual formulation of religion. As Professor W. N. Clarke pointed out, theology holds precisely the same relation to religion that botany does to plant life. A scientific discussion among botanists does not produce the slightest effect upon the growing plants. Neither does theological controversy alter the religious experience of the man of the street. Botanists do produce startling changes in plant growth and theologians do effect progress in religious experience, but clearly botany is not life nor is theology religion. If then religion is neither ecclesiasticism nor theology, what is it? Religion is life. By this terse statement we do not mean to identify life and religion. But religion, as contrasted with creeds and theologies, *is* life. In order that we may not lose ourselves in the breadth of such an all-inclusive definition, let us endeavor to be more specific in defining religion. It is dependent not upon organized forms, nor upon intellectual formulations, but solely upon man's life lived in its relationships.



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

Any careful analysis of life shows that man is related to himself, to others and to the universe. The vital recognition of these relationships is religion. But again it is not entirely satisfactory to pause here. When one accepts a theistic interpretation of the universe, then religion is more properly defined as man's life in relation to God's life. But let it be understood in all its implications, that religion, in the last analysis, is the acceptance of life's relationships. *To be religious is to be tied to self, to others and to God.* That such a conception is perfectly consistent with the teachings of Jesus is obvious.

We are now prepared to see what our subject involves. It concerns these two factors of education and religion. It becomes apparent at once that our two definitions seem very similar and almost synonymous. As one peruses educational and theological literature, he is frequently surprised by attempted definitions in the two fields. In some cases the word "religion" might be substituted with perfect consistency in a given definition of education or *vice versa*. When one finds himself in such a circle it is wise either to look carefully at the definitions or to pass, if possible, from the abstract to the concrete. If then we cease to think of education and religion in the abstract and consider them both in the life of some individual, our definitions seem perfectly logical and consistent. Moreover, the significant fact is that thus considered they do not seem con-

## *Education and Religion*

tradictory and opposing factors, but natural and harmonious allies. In fact, these two things are apparent: (1) Is it not true that often the same man is both educated and religious? Surely no one stands ready to defend the hypothesis nor is even willing to admit that every educated person is non-religious, nor that every religious man is uneducated. In other words *both* factors are often in one life. (2) On the other hand it must be frankly recognized that a person may be educated without being religious and may be religious without being educated. That is, *one* factor is often present without the other. Therefore we must neither regard education and religion as mutually exclusive factors of life nor as identical. No one desires to establish their complete identity. It may be beneficial to the present situation, however, if we can see clearly that both may exist harmoniously in the life of any given individual. Our sole purpose in this chapter is not to show wherein our two factors differ, nor to point out what it is in each that makes us conceive of them as distinct elements of life, but to indicate wherein they are alike and to establish that they are perfectly consistent with one another when correctly conceived. If this interpretation be true, our definitions have helped us on our way toward satisfactory conclusions. We are now prepared to consider how these two elements *are* related and how they *should be* related to produce our ideal aims in either field.

# *Our Intellectual Attitude*

## THE PRESENT PROBLEM.

The reader is already familiar with the present situation which is involved in our discussion. Everyone recognizes that the problem exists. Our endeavor at this juncture, therefore, is neither to state a familiar fact nor to establish the existence of a certain problem, but rather to attempt an analysis of the existing situation and undertake to state it in the terms of its causes. If this can be accomplished we shall be well on our way toward the consideration of a possible solution of the difficulty. What, then, are the causes which have contributed to the production of the present relationships existing between education and religion?

Let us recognize at once the complexity of the issues involved. It would be short-sighted to place the full blame upon any one agency. A great variety of forces have been acting and reacting upon one another. We can only hope, therefore, to break into the circle at some point and set down the causes which we seem to find. No one alone will adequately explain our problem. All are in operation. Each gives strength to the other. Their effect is strikingly cumulative. When taken separately each cause seems weak, but combined they produce the clear, well-defined problem which is before us.

Perhaps it will add clearness and definiteness to our statement of these causes if we study

## *Education and Religion*

them from the standpoint of the individual student and endeavor to set down in almost chronological order the various forces that go to make up his ultimate attitude to the question of religion.

In the first place, there is his early home and religious training. It is often assumed by parents and religious workers that the youth enters college with a splendid religious equipment. It is supposed that the early years of home life supplemented by the instruction received in the Sunday Schools and kindred institutions, together with his regular school work, have succeeded in producing a character which is adequately religious. It must be frankly admitted, however, without now discussing the wisdom or the causes of the change, that the religious training of the home as maintained in former generations, is largely disappearing. American life, especially in our cities, has become so complex, that much of the oldtime family association has vanished. The youth of America, as a rule, do not acquire any very deep religious experience before entering college. This is no assertion that they should do so, but only an effort to make clear where the ultimate responsibility rests. Our professors often have lamentable evidence of the fact that for the college student neither the home training nor the Sunday School has established a vital religious life. Or granted that the youth does arrive at the college gate with something like a religious training it frequently happens that his attitude

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

is unreal and fictitious. This is the result either of natural immaturity or of a training which sets religion apart from the rest of life and instils a false and almost superstitious attitude to the things of the spirit. At any rate, here is one factor of his experience. It includes all of the training which comes to him before entering college and usually emanates chiefly from the home and some representative institutions of organized religion. Its type and point of view is well defined. Save in some homes and localities where distinct progress has been made along lines of biblical and religious instruction, it is not far from the truth to say that the training which is received during this early period is liable to stand in quite marked contrast to that which awaits the boy or girl upon entering college.

In the second place, we must recognize all of those subtle forces which we group together under the title of "college influences." The youth recognizes at once that no institution is more truly respected by all classes of people than the college or university. He is fully aware of its remarkable prosperity and, despite the severe criticisms, of its usefulness. He is thus prepared to yield himself quite fully to its influence. Immediately upon entrance, he finds himself in a new world. The atmosphere is permeated with a spirit of open-mindedness in the search for truth in all realms. The scientific spirit of the laboratory fascinates him. It teaches him to begin with facts. The study of



## *Education and Religion*

history, economics, psychology, philosophy and biblical criticism all add their silent, inevitable influences. Gradually he finds himself with a changed or changing view of the world, of life and of duty. The consequent effect upon the intellectual attitude of the student is marked and varied. Often he is mentally confused. Unable to relate successfully his past and his present training, he finds himself in a state of honest distraction. More often he becomes simply indifferent. Feeling that the solution of the problem lies beyond him, he endeavors to place it in the background of his mind, and silently to disregard the whole question of religion. Possibly more often still, he rebels against the intellectual status of his past, and naturally lacking both in judgment and in appreciation of historic perspective, and unconscious of the necessity of ever striving to adjust the new to the old, he becomes unduly radical, throws the whole question overboard and passes out into a state of excessive skepticism. He stands as a typical illustration of our age of criticism. Moreover, from the practical point of view, for four formative years he is taken out of his home and all intimate and continuous touch with the local religious organizations. It is only natural that he should lose active interest in their work. From the positive standpoint, he has presented to him in a most effective manner the appeal of social service. The resulting religious attitude of the student, owing both to his intellectual and prac-



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

tical environment, stands often in striking contrast to that which he had upon entrance to college.

In the third place, as we continue to trace the influences which produce our present problem in the relationship of education and religion, we must recognize that the student is seriously influenced by the prevailing conditions of the various organizations representing religion. Without in any sense seeming to sympathize with all the criticisms that are passed upon our various churches, we must, nevertheless, recognize that a popular impression prevails which has exerted its paralyzing influence over the college man. Recent church statistics indicate a more hopeful and flourishing condition than many would have supposed, but the significant fact remains that popular opinion seems to insist that the church as a whole has failed to prove its efficiency in grappling with modern social conditions. Our college student, moreover, does touch an indubitable fact when he observes the lack of modernity in the intellectual life of some churches. Many men have turned from the church because, rightly or wrongly, they have been unwilling to endeavor to relate their point of view to that of orthodox Christianity. It is here that we touch upon a fundamental difficulty. It is the contrast which exists between the intellectual point of view of the college student and the average church which makes the present situation so serious. Such a statement as this is

## *Education and Religion*

always open to misinterpretation and just criticism. There is rising in the churches throughout our country a younger generation of both ministers and communicants who are thoroughly modern and scientific. Few communities to-day do not afford the college man or woman a church home which is satisfactory, inviting and intellectually stimulating. Nevertheless, in all sections of our country there are many churches and clergymen still living in the thought world of generations gone by. The spirit and atmosphere of the entire organization is repelling to the modern man. Its terms are meaningless to him. The unreality of its religious phraseology is appalling. It is just the contrast between the intellectual temper of such an organization and the scientific point of view of the college which constitutes our problem. They represent two separate thought universes. The college man is an alien in such a church.

In the fourth place, it must not be forgotten that both the college and the church have a common background which is not to be disregarded in this analysis. It is an acknowledged truism but still a potent factor in our present situation that we live in an age of commercialism. The spirit of our times exalts the things of sense. We live in a day of practical if not quasi-philosophical materialism. The inevitable result is that any organization which exists for the purpose of cultivating spiritual realities is often silently disregarded if not condemned. The result is that the college student, struggling

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

with the contrast between his early training and his college point of view, and finding the organized forms of religion the object of serious misgivings is only confirmed in his tendency away from religion as such when he turns his attention to the outer world and contemplates the ideals and spirit of present day civilization. These, then, are some of the causes contributing to our present problem. The consequent chasm between education and religion, between the college man and religious organizations, is therefore not surprising.

### A POSSIBLE SOLUTION.

It seems absurd to attempt to suggest any solution for so complicated a problem in a brief chapter, but it is often beneficial to view our questions in their largeness, giving careful attention to details when once the underlying principles have been established. If our endeavor to state the coöperating causes, though only partial and incomplete, has made us more fully aware of our problem, then we have not totally failed, and likewise, at this juncture where we pass from the consideration of the relationships of education and religion as they are to the attempt to conceive them as they should be, if we succeed in merely turning our faces in the right direction, then our discussion will not prove valueless.

Let us approach our task from a negative point of view and dispose at once, if possible, of some of the vain hopes that have lured on

## *Education and Religion*

the representatives of both fields. There is always advantage in realizing fully where the coveted goal does not lie. Now our problem involves two factors. This fact suggests that the dilemma might be solved by changing either one of its horns,—that the antithesis might be transcended by altering one or the other of its two members. Therefore shall we change education? Shall its ideals be altered and its fundamental point of view be changed? After all, it must be admitted that we put our finger upon the chief cause of the difficulties when we candidly acknowledge that in essence our situation involves a fundamental conflict in the intellectual point of view of the traditional church and the modern college. When one considers the historic significance of the church and its service for education, it would seem most fitting, if either of our organizations is to be changed, that it should be the college. Some have been so concerned about the teachings of our colleges that they have seriously suggested the wisdom of establishing limitations upon what shall be taught. Shall we, therefore, adjust the college to the church?

Now without in any sense attempting a complete justification of the college, which is after all only an imperfect representation of the true spirit of modern education, and without seeming to minimize its failures or to underestimate its responsibilities, it must be obvious to all that as a people we are proud of our colleges, that above all else, we prize our freedom of

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

thought, that never for a moment could we seriously consider the wisdom of interfering with their fearless search for truth. It would be subversive of all our best ideals. Without seeming to assume that truth is static or that its formulations must not change with every age, it must be emphatically stated that the modern scientific point of view is here to remain. One might as well ask the world to accept the Ptolemaic system of astronomy instead of the Copernican, or ask mankind to live as though America had not been discovered, as to suggest that the present scientific method be given up. In its major contentions, at least, it is here to stay. It is useless to ask education to substitute the formal mechanical thought world of past generations for the present spirit of scholarly investigation. Let us then frankly abandon this suggestion and understand that in our search for a solution of our present situation we shall not find it in an attempt to alter the main features of the intellectual attitude of our colleges.

Turning then to the other factor of the problem, shall we change the organized forms of religion? At this juncture, also, attempting no complete defense of the church, recognizing clearly the asserted inefficiency of many of its branches, and being fully aware of the justice of many of the criticisms and accusations, let it be said that this suggestion is born of the utter failure to appreciate the historic significance and value of organized religion. Just as



## *Education and Religion*

it was necessary to insist that the college point of view is here to abide so it must be stated with equal emphasis that religion is a permanent part of life. We must recognize that this is in no sense equivalent to saying that present creeds or existing forms of the organized manifestations of religion are permanent. That would be no more possible than that present educational organizations and methods should prove permanent. But it does mean that religion is here to stay. It means that you might as well place each man and woman in unthinkable and utter isolation as to suggest the abolition of religion. If religion is what it has been defined to be it is an absolutely inseparable element of all life. Life is not life without religion. Here again, therefore, we abandon another method. Our solution lies neither in the direction of altering the modern educational and scientific spirit nor in an utter disregard of religion and its organized forms.

Where then does it lie? *Simply in a clear recognition of the inner unity of all true education and real religion.* To suppose any possible conflict between them is the difficult undertaking and the hypothesis which demands cogent defense. Our present situation arises on the one hand from the scientific man identifying real religion with its present defective manifestation in its organizations and on the other hand from the man of religion assuming that a fixed body of truth was once for all delivered unto the saints and his consequent failure to under-



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

stand modern education. Therefore the very partial solution which we suggest is simply this: Let both sides fully recognize that no conflict need exist between these two great fundamental factors of American life. As we have seen they are neither entirely identical nor inherently opposed. Education need not replace religion nor religion exclude education. Their fields at least partially coincide. Emphasis in the one is intellectual, in the other emotional, in the one it is training for life, in the other it is the attempt to live life at its best. We only need, therefore, to recognize the truth which the actual personal experience of numberless individuals attests, namely the perfect compatibility of education and religion. But what does this involve?

It involves for organized religion a natural adjustment to the college point of view. It means, stated specifically, that sooner or later all of our churches and similar organizations, as many have already done, must come to a full, frank and open acceptance of the intellectual point of view of modern education. But so long as some churches resist, with their natural conservatism, the intellectual attitude of the college man, they cannot hope to find him a very useful ally. But more particularly it involves for organized education a broader, saner and more sympathetic attitude to religion. It demands that the college will be of more service in helping the individual student to some intellectual unity and positiveness of convic-

## *Education and Religion*

tion, that it will give to him a clearer conception of the fundamental character of true religion, and that it will inspire him with the possibility of being of value to his generation by enabling the various organizations of religion to come to the modern point of view. It is the representative of education, with his clear certainty of the truth of his position, who must bridge the chasm and bring the college and church to a better understanding of one another because he himself sees that true education and real religion are both efforts to enable one to adjust himself to the relationships and responsibilities of the world. Here, then, is our suggested solution, partial and meager as it is. We need not hope for any great change in the intellectual point of view of the college, nor for the abolition of religion. Both will, without doubt, continue to abide among us. Our hope lies in simply accepting both and seeing, when freed from the useless accretions of the centuries and the possible vagaries, excesses and extravagances to which advance movements have always been susceptible, that in essence they are not only perfectly compatible but also natural and historic allies.

### THE COMMON BASIS.

In order that our suggested solution may not seem to rest solely upon our definitions of the two factors involved, and in order that we may see definitely that there is actually existing to-day a broad and common basis upon which edu-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

cation and religion might unite, let us now endeavor to set down as briefly as possible what might be regarded as the predominating characteristics of the college teaching of today and consequently the mental furnishings of the college graduate as he emerges to take his place in the world. We shall not formulate these prevailing conceptions in devotional or theological terms. But it will become apparent at once that there is nothing involved in them which is necessarily contradictory to vital religious living nor to which our churches could not be adjusted. That many of our strongest organizations are rapidly doing so is proof of the innate potentialities of true religion to adjust itself to any environment.

Without doubt one of the first characteristics of modern education that would suggest itself even to the casual observer is its scientific spirit. This is the heart of the new education. It enthrones truth. Without underestimating the value of speculation, without minimizing the necessity of theories and hypotheses, it insists first of all upon the acquisition of facts. Accurately and carefully acquired data is the absolutely essential prerequisite of all knowledge. The modern investigator is concerned about nothing so much as about the truth. For him truth recognizes no time distinctions. It matters not whether some would call his conclusions new or old, orthodox or heterodox. The supreme aim is to avoid error and to find truth. He is fully aware of his frequent inac-

## *Education and Religion*

curacies, of the difficulties involved in searching for infinite knowledge with a finite mind and imperfect tools, but his glory is that, regardless of these necessary imperfections, he struggles patiently and quietly toward the acquisition of larger truth. This spirit, carried over from the German universities, has so permeated American education that every student today consciously or unconsciously feels its spell. Every college professor is not an investigator nor capable of expanding the boundaries of his science, but nevertheless this ideal of modern education has affected his spirit and in diluted form at least reaches his students.

Let us observe the fundamental importance of this attitude to truth for the representatives of religion. It means that our college men and women today are prepared and determined to know the truth. They are perfectly willing to recognize clearly the message of history and the truth of the past. Facts are facts. Truth is truth whether formulated in the fifth century before Christ or in the twentieth century after Christ, whether couched in the terminology of Platonic philosophy or Augustinian theology. This spirit is a mighty asset for the modern church. The college youth of today has no desire to avoid the basal facts of life. He accepts, in the true scientific spirit, the categories of right and wrong, he never doubts the authority of conscience, whether he conceives of it as intuitive or acquired, and he does not ignore the personal needs of inspiration for the

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

great work of life. What more significant attitude than this could the modern prophet seek? To be sure, when we touch the question of authority we know at once where our college trained man will stand. We know that for him the religion of external authority must be replaced by the religion of the spirit. He demands the freedom of the truth. We know at once that for him the authority of any religion will be the authority of the truth which it expresses. But certainly no one could wish that he should recognize any other authority. Above all, from a practical point of view, our student naturally reflects the spirit of modern education. His attitude is one of toleration. He is patiently seeking for the truth wherever it may be found. He endeavors to avoid dogmatism. He rarely runs to extremes. The easy thing to do in any intellectual problem is to see the truth which lies in one direction only. The great man is the one who is able to discern the elements of truth involved in both sides of a great controversy. This ability is one of the happy by-products of the scientific frame of mind and is another aspect of the tremendous advantage accruing to religion from the spirit born of this open-minded search for truth.

Again, a distinctive feature of modern education is that it sees clearly that all truth is related to life. Truth is only truth as it is truth *for us*. The objective independent order of thought must find its complement in an active mind. Modern theories of knowledge



## *Education and Religion*

teach this unmistakably. Every age, therefore, must express in its own life and in its own terminology the truth for that age. Change in thought formulations must be expected. Truth is alive. It is not some dead, fixed, external entity, but a growing, expanding, developing life. The universe must be conceived in terms of development. Here again, we see another aspect of the common basis for a growing unity between education and religion. The college man will not be disturbed over much by natural transitions and transformations in the formulation of religious truths.

Still again, our colleges of today are distinctly marked by the emphasis placed upon the social aspect of all life. The college trained man looks upon the world as a cosmos and not a chaos. The term "unity" possesses a peculiar charm for him. Nothing is unrelated. All the universe and all life is one. Philosophy, psychology and sociology all contribute their own peculiar emphasis to this idea. Isolation gives place to society, extreme individualism to social relationships. As a consequence, the basis is laid for the appeal for social service. Professors of sociology may, and perhaps must, present in a cold and abstract way the technical knowledge involved in their science, but the student rarely fails to feel the demand for social betterment. Facts may be dry as dust, but social conditions, such as America witnesses, inevitably stir the very depths of patriotism. Modern sociology, therefore, carries in its heart



## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

the very thing which religion demands,—it inspires social service. That organized representatives of religion do and may use college men and women thrilled with this particular aspect of duty, and that it is absurd to suppose that this attitude is not perfectly compatible with sane religion is most obvious.

Furthermore, whatever may be the prevailing attitude of Americans to life in general, however commercial and practically materialistic our age may be, the very significant fact remains that our colleges are far from this point of view philosophically and that the great majority of our college graduates have been won for idealism. To them the things of sense are at least subordinate to the things of the spirit. Plato's world of ideas is for them more real than this world of change and instability. Whatever reality this life possesses, it possesses because it is the expression of mind. Philosophers may differ widely in their statements of this general interpretation, they may be classified technically as absolute or objective idealists or what not but when the choice lies between materialism or idealism we find them arrayed distinctly against the practical or quasi-philosophical materialism of the age and ranged on the side of idealism. Few indeed, speaking comparatively, are the college men and women today who do not accept intellectually at least the statement that "the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal." To them, goodness,

## *Education and Religion*

beauty, truth and love are the fundamental realities of life. That in this general philosophical attitude alone there is a sufficiently large and common basis for a proper relationship of education and religion is most apparent. It only remains for religion to take this intellectual attitude and provide it with a worthy dynamic. That this is the specific duty of organized religion, that it has in Christianity and its Founder the truth and the message which will enable it to fulfil this obligation, is perfectly plain. In this philosophical attitude the college has already won the battle to a remarkable degree. It only remains for the church to utilize the potentialities placed within its reach.

Finally, as a natural corollary of this philosophical standpoint, it is not insignificant that our college student frankly and candidly recognizes the limitations of human knowledge. This is especially significant for religion because of the nature of the problem with which it deals. While every field of knowledge has its border problems, while every science ends in a question which it cannot answer, still it must be admitted that religion confronts exceptional difficulties. The chemist deals with tangible realities, the astronomer gazes upon a physical universe, even the mathematician enjoys the benefits of cogent logic, but the man of religion is nothing short of a philosopher and metaphysician. In brief, his duty compels him to offer a satisfactory theory of the universe

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

and of life. By the very terms of the problem, he is doomed to defeat *or* to a frank acceptance of the limitations of knowledge and the mystery of existence. If, therefore, our college youth are already trained for this conception it again adds increasing probability to his harmonious adjustment to the demands of rational religion. He is not disturbed by mystery. He is not eager for details. He loses no inspiration if his clergyman cannot explain to him the geography of heaven or the chronology of the future. He is searching for something closer to the life and the needs of the world.

We may also call attention, from the practical side, to the extensive religious activities, carried on entirely under student control, in all of our higher institutions. With thousands of students enrolled in Bible and mission study classes and with multitudinous activities for the spiritual welfare of college students, we have much to confirm us in the opinion that the present day college life is not totally non-religious.

Candidly, then, is there not in the intellectual equipment of the college graduate just those fundamental things which the church or the religious organizations may take and use as the common basis for a more satisfactory religious life? In the students' fundamental love of truth, with all that it involves especially in the way of the possibility of thought adjustment, in his emphasis upon the social aspect of life embodying an irresistible appeal for patriotic and brotherly service, in his frank acceptance of

## *Education and Religion*

the reality of the spiritual as contrasted with the material, in his willing admission of the limitations of knowledge and the inevitable presence of mystery, are there not all of the essential intellectual prerequisites for a life of vital religion? Cannot religion find here a superb foundation for its own superstructure? If so, and if we have succeeded in making this fact partially clear then we have realized our object in this final chapter which has been to show that our churches represent an essential, permanent element of human life at its best and that our colleges are not centers of non-religious culture. In other words we have endeavored to carry our subject out into the actual world and to show that any man, scientifically and critically trained in our colleges and universities and endowed with an overmastering passion which will be satisfied with nothing but the truth, may find that religion as interpreted in this book is not only entirely consistent with his intellectual standards but is a natural and inevitable part of a symmetrical and well-balanced life. Indeed religion may become at once the most satisfying and stimulating factor in that life.

Our intellectual attitude, then, in this age of criticism, even when confronted by the problems of religion—the severest tests which it will meet in any field,—is an open-minded candid search for the truth. An active mind engaged in an unceasing effort to understand and ap-

## *Our Intellectual Attitude*

propriate an external order of truth, this is our intellectual ideal. It calls us to the freedom of the truth. It offers the only condition which can satisfy the persistent demands of our minds, and provide a genuine and abiding basis for our beliefs. It promises us spiritual freedom. "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

May the reader enter into the rich blessings of the freedom of the truth. While all of us are but partially free, we have learned in these pages the path to the fullest liberty. May that partial freedom grow year by year into the full liberty of those who gradually acquire by fearless and tireless intellectual effort and by experiences bitter and sweet a deep understanding of the world.

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free  
And none is free beside."

It is just this intellectual attitude which is creating for us a new world and a deeper and richer individual and community life. Of our generation, as of none which has preceded it, can it be said that it realizes the vision of Samuel Longfellow when he wrote:

"One in the freedom of the truth,  
One in the joy of paths untrod,  
One in the soul's perennial youth,  
One in the larger thought of God."

THE END

Page 59

Adolph Jülicher  
"Intro to New Testament."

Page 78

George Herbert Palmer "Problem of Freedom".

Page 82

James. - "Principles of Psychology Vol 1."

Page 101

Wilhelm Boussuet

"The Faith of a Modern Protestant."



230.0903

1624

~~B9746~~

B9550

Burton, Marion LeRoy

Our intellectual attitude in  
an age of criticism

DATE DUE			

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE  
POWELL LIBRARY  
SANTA CLARITA, CA 91321

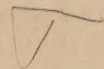


230.0903

~~B9746~~

1624 ✓

1624



THE MASTER'S COLLEGE

230.0903 B955o

MAIN

Burton, Marion LeRo/Our intellectual att



3 3540 00106 7780